

Muslims, Serbs sign ceasefire

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Serbs and Muslims on Friday signed a ceasefire to take effect at day, late at noon (1100 GMT) on Saturday and Serbs said they had already ordered their forces to stop fighting. "This is the most serious ceasefire reached in Bosnia," United Nations spokesman Alexander Ivanov said after intense shuttle diplomacy by U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi yielded the deal. The ceasefire should have started at noon on Friday. But Mr. Akashi was still negotiating a simplified version of the agreement, removing serious obstacles, when the deadline came (see inside). Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic agreed to a ceasefire until Jan. 1 to be followed by a four-month "cessation of hostilities." Mr. Akashi said international talks on a big power peace plan would happen during the second phase while the United Nations deployed peacekeeping forces between the warring sides. The agreement crowned private mediation by U.S. President Jimmy Carter who was called in by Bosnian Serbs to break the deadlock in efforts to end almost 33 months of war in Bosnia.

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Arafat to visit Jordan Sunday — official

AMMAN (AFP) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat will visit Jordan Sunday for talks with King Hussein on the latest developments in the Middle East. Palestinian officials said Friday. It will be Mr. Arafat's first visit to Amman since Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel on Oct. 26. The officials said the talks would focus on the "special role" in administering Muslim shrines in Jerusalem accorded to Jordan by the peace treaty. Mr. Arafat, who heads the Palestinian self-rule authority, was not invited to the signing ceremony on the Jordanian-Israeli border, which was attended by U.S. President Bill Clinton. Jordan has said it planned to maintain custody over the holy shrines only until Palestinian autonomy was extended to Jerusalem. Negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem are due to begin in May 1996.

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Holiday declared

AMMAN (Petra) — All ministries, government departments and public institutions will be closed Thursday Dec. 29 in observance of Al Israa Wal Mi'raj anniversary, which falls on Friday, Dec. 30. This was announced by a communique issued Friday by Prime Minister Abdulalam Majali. Al Israa Wal Mi'raj marks the Prophet Muhammad's nocturnal trip to heaven.

Nazareth Muslims celebrate Christmas

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Muslims in the town of Nazareth in northern Israel where Jesus lived have decked out their mosque with Christmas decorations and will celebrate the Christmas festival. "We celebrate Christmas every year, 400 Muslim scouts will take part in the festivities in Nazareth," on Saturday, said Atef Yusef Al Fahum, leader of the town's White Mosque. The mosque devoted its sermon at Friday prayers to the subject of Christmas. "Christ is a prophet for Muslims, his birth was recorded in the Quran," Mr. Fahum said. "It is fitting Christmas should be the subject of today's sermon." Nazareth Mayor Ramez Jaraisi hailed the initiative of the White Mosque, the largest mosque in the town of Israel's Galilee region. "It shows fraternity and unity. It shows the true face of Nazareth," Mr. Jaraisi said, adding that "all the town's festivals are shared by everyone."

Yoga is answer to Israeli security fears

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Yoga could be the answer to Israel's security problems and prevent another Middle East war, a fighter pilot told Israel Radio here Friday proposing the formation of a special squadron of yogis. Air force yoga experts were able to create a "magnetic field" which will help bring a serene atmosphere to the entire region, Commander Reuven Zilinkovsky said. The proposal had been submitted to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, he added. "Just as our country has a nuclear power station and an army for defence, so there should be a squadron of yogis. That will break down the hostility surrounding us, and so prevent another war in the Middle East," said Mr. Zilinkovsky, an electronics engineer. He said yoga experts had already dispersed hostility emanating from two Arab villages in the Galilee region of northern Israel — Deir Hana and Sakhnin. "We live in perfect harmony with their inhabitants," Mr. Zilinkovsky said. "What is true for Galilee can also be true for Lebanon," he added.

Bridegroom killed in clash with police

KARACHI, Pakistan (R) — Two people including the bridegroom were killed and nine were wounded on Friday in a clash between police and a wedding party in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi. An angry crowd then tried to burn down the nearby police station. "We can't say what's happening. There is firing from all sides," a policeman inside the station told Reuters by telephone.

Saudi, Yemeni beheaded for murder

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi and a Yemeni condemned to death for two separate murders were beheaded in Saudi Arabia on Friday, the Interior Ministry said here. The Saudi, Hassan Assayiri, was found guilty of killing a fellow Saudi in a personal quarrel; the ministry said in a statement quoted by state radio. He was executed in Riyadh. Ahmad Ben Ali Ma'ad, a Yemeni, killed one of his compatriots for similar reasons and was executed in Jeddah on the Red Sea coast.

Russian deputies seek truce as warplanes continue to hit Grozny

Concern mounts in West over casualties

GROZNY (Agencies) — Russian forces pounded Grozny, the Chechen capital, with bombs and artillery rounds on Friday and Russia's lower house of parliament appealed to President Boris Yeltsin and his rivals to halt the fighting. France and Britain also voiced concern about the situation in the breakaway, mainly Muslim region of Chechnya after a relentless bombardment of Grozny since Thursday that has claimed dozens of lives. So far the rest of the world has been silent. "I don't know who can stop this, but someone must stop it. Please, stop it," a young Grozny woman, fighting back tears as she held her daughter's hand, told Russia's independent television channel NTV. Deputies in Russia's State Duma appealed for an urgent ceasefire after jets bombed Grozny hourly through the night, damaging buildings and killing more civilians after carnage the previous day. The Duma voted 238 to 38 with three abstentions to back a call for a moratorium on military actions and to hold peace talks, but efforts to call a no-confidence motion against Mr. Yeltsin failed.

There was no immediate response from any side and hopes of ending the fighting seemed unlikely. Russia, which sent troops to Chechnya on Dec. 11 to halt the region's three-year drive for independence, has stiffened its military campaign in the last two days by intensifying air strikes on central Grozny. Russian troops backed by artillery and helicopter

gunships were waging a major assault to completely seal off Grozny. Elite marines units and two motorised divisions arrived in the region Friday and sealed off the capital of the breakaway Chechnya republic, a Russian government spokesman in Moscow said.

The official said the information had come from the command headquarters of the Russian operation in Chechnya, adding that the report had been "verified." "The Siberian and Urals motorised divisions and marines units have arrived around Grozny to reinforce troops already present on the ground," reported the ITAR-TASS news agency, citing a government statement.

Earlier, fierce fighting was reported east of Grozny as Russian troops mounted a major attack against the strategic town of Argun about 20 kilometres away in a bid to complete their encirclement of the capital. Argun stands on the road from Grozny to Gudermes in the neighbouring Republic of Dagestan, whose border with Chechnya was closed by Russian troops Friday.

Russian troops, sent Dec. 11 to crush the rebel republic's three-year-old independence bid, control exits from the city to the west and north. The southern route is open to allow refugees to flee, but it does not communicate by road with adjoining republics.

Correspondents at Argun reported that the Russians' bombardment outgunned Chechen defenders with helicopter gunships and artillery. Warplanes roared overhead. Smoke poured out of Argun and two positions near the

town. At 11:00 a.m. (0800 GMT) about eight Chechen defenders hid behind a concrete barricade on the strategic road armed with a heavy machine-gun for shooting at the helicopters and anti-tank grenade launchers. But the odds were clearly stacked against them. Four helicopters flew low in wide circles over the flat, snow-covered fields by the road, firing rockets and machineguns at anything that moved.

Just outside Argun, a helicopter opened machinegun fire on a correspondent and his Chechen driver from a distance of about 400 metres. "Kicking up snow less than a couple of metres away." The Russian defence ministry earlier warned journalists to leave combat zones following the death of freelance American photographer Cynthia Elbaum, who died in a Russian air raid on Grozny Thursday.

Western governments called on Moscow on Friday to limit civilian casualties in the conflict in Chechnya, a sign of their growing concern over the repercussions of Russia's military adventure in the North Caucasian region.

Britain and France said they had told Moscow they were worried about the growing number of civilian casualties in Grozny. A British Foreign Office spokesman said London had signalled its concerns through diplomatic channels.

A French foreign ministry spokesman said Paris had asked the Kremlin to protect foreign nationals and journalists, a day after calling on

(Continued on page 7)

Troops, Palestinians clash at West Bank settlement

OCCUPIED BETH-LEHEM, West Bank (Agencies) — Israeli troops fired tear-gas Friday to disperse Palestinian villagers who tried for a second day to block the construction of a new residential area in a West Bank Jewish settlement.

Witnesses said several dozen Palestinians from Al Khadr village stopped bulldozers clearing ground in the Efrata settlement near Bethlehem.

Security forces arrested two of the protesters and a press photographer. The army sealed off the area.

The Palestinians claim the 40 hectares of land. But an Israeli army spokesman claimed the land was under the "jurisdiction" of Efrata, a settlement inhabited by 5,000 Jews.

The Israeli military authority seized the land in 1982 and allocated it to the settlement for development. Efrata "mayor" Gideon Ahimani said he planned to build 500 extra homes on the land with private funds.

But Hassan Salah, a Palestinian villager, told AFP: "This is one of the last plots of land still owned by Al Khadr after thousands of hectares were confiscated for Israeli settlements."

Settlements in the region cover 60 square kilometres. They are due to be linked to Jerusalem in 18 months' time by a new road bypassing the Palestinian village. Efrata lies on the edge of Jerusalem — an area where Israel is planning to build thousands of homes over the coming months, while continuing negotiations with the Palestinians on extending self-rule. The government has given the green light for 1,900 homes to be built in 1995 in Maale Adumin east of Jerusalem. Five hundred are

already under construction. South of the Holy City, 1,000 homes are being built in Betar, with 1,000 more on the drawing board.

To the north, 500 homes are being built in Givat Zeev. In East Jerusalem, work will begin on 10,000 new homes in 1995.

Under the declaration of principles signed in Washington in September 1993, the army is to pull out of urban areas on the West Bank before elections to a new Palestinian autonomy council. But the details are still being negotiated.

Some 120,000 settlers live in 120 settlements on the West Bank.

In Friday's protest, Palestinians said a 65-year-old Palestinian suffered bruises when an Israeli officer pushed him to the ground and then was hit by a bulldozer during the sit-down protest, in which demonstrators blocked the path of a bulldozer on land the injured man said belonged to him. The man was taken to hospital.

Israeli soldiers also detained two Palestinians from the crowd of more than 200 villagers protesting the work. "There were about 50 soldiers and officers guarding the settlers. We demanded to know by what right they are working on our land," said Ali Issa, 36, one of the land-owners.

The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, said Friday the "weakness" of the Palestinian Authority was to blame for the killing of one of its followers in the autonomous West Bank enclave of Jericho.

Attackers knocked over Ibrahim Mohammad Yaghi, 30, with their car in the Aqbat Jabr refugee camp in the Jericho enclave Thursday, then shot him in the head.

In a statement released Friday, Hamas said the incident "proves once again the weakness of the so-called self-rule authority."

It charged Israel with masterminding the killing. The group, which is violently opposed to the peace process, threatened to "double" its "revenge against the terrorist (Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin, his soldiers and their collaborators."

A security official in Jericho told AFP authorities had launched an investigation into the incident, but had made no arrests so far. "We are searching in every direction, but we have little background to work with," Mahmoud Abassi said.

Hamas accused Palestinian security forces of "protecting the Israeli occupation and chasing the mujahideen (holy warriors)," instead of "stopping collaborators and Zionist killers who freely roam the autonomous areas."

Hamas has had tense relations with the self-rule authority since autonomy was launched in the Gaza Strip and Jericho in May.

In its statement, Hamas also said Palestinian police had still not found the killer of Hani Abed, a leader of the Islamic Jihad organisation, blown up by a car bomb in Gaza on Nov. 2.

"Hamas holds the self-rule authority responsible for the continuation of such crimes, and reaffirms that its feeble and lax method of investigation can only lead to more crimes."

All political factions here blamed Israel for Abed's assassination, and said Palestinian collaborators carried it out.

Gaza police have detained several men suspected of planting the car bomb.



A man sits on the remains of his house destroyed by a bomb after several air strikes by the Russian forces over Grozny (AFP photo)

Israeli, Syrian generals meet in bid to end deadlock

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — An Israeli delegation led by Chief of Staff General Ehud Barak held talks with high-ranking Syrian military officials in Washington, in the first such meeting since 1949.

The talks Thursday dealt with security problems linked to any future Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, the stumbling block in three years of peace negotiations, military Radio said Friday.

The radio did not name the Syrian officials but said the team was led by a general. The Israeli delegation included Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's advisor General Danny Yatom.

The military officials were accompanying the ambassadors of Israel and Syria in Washington, Itamar Rabinovich and Walid Mouallem, who resumed their talks on Thursday.

Yossi Olmert, a researcher at the Hebrew University here, said it was an important meeting.

Senior Israeli and Syrian officers have held talks before, but this is the first time since the signing of the 1949 armistice accord with Syria in (the Greek island of) Rhodes that an Israeli chief of staff has attended.

Syria was the last Arab

country to sign an armistice with Israel, on July 20, 1949. The officials are to resume their discussions next week following the Christmas holiday in Washington, the radio said. The Israeli delegation left for home Friday.

In an interview published by the Jerusalem Post newspaper, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the level of Syrian representation at the talks was still not high enough to produce a breakthrough.

The negotiations are stuck on the scope and timing of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan as well as the type of peaceful relations to be established.

Syria suspended its formal negotiations with Israel after the Hebron Mosque massacre in February. Mr. Peres said peace with Israel was not on Syrian President Hafez Al Assad's agenda.

"He has another agenda and that is the Arab World. He wants to demonstrate to the Arab World that he knows how to negotiate better than anyone else. He thinks he is winning. And he probably thinks that the United States can exercise much more pressure," on Israel, Mr. Peres said. According to Mr. Olmert, who said he had contacted

Syrian experts, the Israeli government has concluded that "it will not reach peace with Syria without a total withdrawal from the Golan, but in return it wants security guarantees which Damascus is hesitating to give."

Israel and Syria had agreed in principle on a demilitarisation of areas on both sides of their future border and the deployment of an international observer force, Mr. Olmert said.

However, Syria rejected an Israeli call to reduce the size of its army and to allow Israeli observation posts at strategic points on the Golan after a withdrawal.

General Barak is due to retire as armed forces chief on January 1. Israeli diplomats said U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was not expected to return to the Middle East before February.

Gen. Barak told the Dec. 26 issue of U.S. News and World Report magazine that a long stalemate in negotiations with Syria "makes another confrontation very probable."

Gen. Barak said Syria had 4,000 tanks, 700 warplanes and missiles such as Scud Bs and Cx and chemical weapons more advanced than Iraq's that could strike Israel.

Israeli jets hit Lebanon after two soldiers killed

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli planes struck at Hizbollah targets in South Lebanon on Friday after the guerrillas killed two Israeli soldiers and wounded seven in heavy attacks on Israeli bases.

Heavy fighting erupted in Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone when Hizbollah (Party of God) guerrillas attacked Israeli posts at Suweida and Dabshah on the northern edge of the zone. An Israeli army spokesman said two soldiers were killed and several wounded in the attacks. He said Israeli troops returned fire, killing several Hizbollah men.

They brought to 21 the number of Israeli soldiers killed this year in South Lebanon — the Jewish state's last active battlefront with neighbouring Arab countries. Israel has lost six dead and 18 wounded in the south this month.

The Lebanese army declared a state of maximum alert and said it returned fire at Israeli positions. Friday's clashes came two days after a bombing which killed three people and wounded 14 others in Sfeir, a Hizbollah stronghold in southern Beirut.

Hizbollah said its raids were in retaliation for the bombing, which it blamed on Israel.

In a communique released in the southern port of Sidon, Hizbollah said it had raided three Israeli positions at the northern tip of the security zone, "causing many casualties in enemy ranks."

It said the "commands of the martyrs of Sfeir attacked the Zionist enemy." One of those killed in the Beirut bombing Wednesday was Foad Moghniyeh, whose brother Imad Moghniyeh is widely suspected of being the mastermind behind the taking of Western hostages between 1984 and 1988.

Hizbollah warned that there would be no let-up in attacks on Israeli forces. Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri also accused Israel of being behind Wednesday's bombing.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking to reporters near Israel's northern border after the attack, ruled out expanding the Jewish state's 15-kilometre deep occupation zone.

"Any attempt to... expand the security zone will force us to commit more forces, to allow them greater geographic mobility and the number of casualties will rise without changing anything for (the security of) residents of the north," he said.

Security sources in Lebanon said Israeli planes staged hit-and-run assaults by firing

four rockets at Hizbollah targets in Iqlim Al Toufah ridge, 40 kilometres south of Beirut from which guerrillas launch attacks on the Israeli-occupied zone.

A Hizbollah guerrilla was wounded in the raid and two Lebanese policemen were killed — apparently burned alive — when an Israeli helicopter rocketed their service jeep five kilometres north of the zone.

SLA sources said the guerrillas rained Sagger missiles, anti-tank rockets, mortar bombs and heavy machinegun fire on the Israeli and SLA posts.

Israeli and SLA tanks and artillery fired back into hills north of the zone, hitting villages, the sources added. U.N. observers in the region said the Israelis and SLA fired more than 200 shells but there was no word on casualties.

Israeli planes then struck at Hizbollah-controlled areas in their first raid on Lebanon since Nov. 13 and their 30th attack this year.

A Reuters reporter saw a helicopter fire a missile into a Lebanese police jeep outside the zone. The impact turned the jeep over and set it on fire and a policeman could be seen burning inside. Security sources said two policemen, including the chief of police in Jba'a village, were killed.

Violence subsides in Bahrain

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Police armed with assault rifles and tear-gas stood ready for action outside Shiite muslim mosques in the Bahraini capital Manama Friday but witnesses said the streets were calm after two weeks of clashes.

The Shiite pilgrims Sanabes, Jid Hafs, Dain, Barbar and Al Diraz were also calm, a witness who visited them Friday said.

Other witnesses contacted from Cyprus said sermons delivered at Friday prayers in Sunni Muslim mosques in Manama made no mention of the clashes which claimed the lives of five demonstrators and four policemen, according to the opposition. The authorities only reported the death of one policeman.

In a statement received by AFP early Friday, the banned Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) had predicted demonstrations after Friday prayers in Jid Hafs and Sanabes. One witness said the streets of Al Diraz were virtually deserted, but still littered with burnt tyres.

In Budaya further north, the scene of repeated clashes since Dec. 5, armed police patrolled the streets in force, he said.

Violence erupted in Bahrain last week when hundreds of Shiite Muslims held protests to demand the release of Shiite cleric Sheikh Ali Salman, who was arrested after calling for the restoration of parliament, suspended in 1975.

The IFLB said more than 1,600 people were arrested, with Muslim clerics especially targeted.

Bahrain, apparently irritated by what it sees as exaggerated Iranian news coverage of the unrest, has recalled its ambassador from Tehran for consultations.

A brief report Friday distributed by the official Gulf News Agency reported the return of Ambassador Sami Khalil Al Moayed on Thursday.

It said he was "summoned for consultations at the foreign ministry," without elaboration.

But Arab diplomats said Tehran's state-guided radio and television had been reporting on the Bahrain tensions with such intensity as to raise suspicion in government circles about whether Tehran was out to incite the unrest.

The diplomats, speaking on condition they not be named, said officials also were upset about perceived exaggerations and false reports aired by the Tehran media.

They mentioned in particular an Iranian-carried report of nine killed in the unrest, and said officials insisted that was not true.

ملكا صند لامل



A municipality worker fixes Christmas decorations in Bethlehem's Manger Square (AFP photo)

U.N. calls for money to fund Somalia aid

NEW YORK (Agencies) — The United Nations appealed Thursday for countries to donate millions of dollars in emergency aid for Somalia even as U.N. troops are removed from the war-torn country.

The U.N. call for \$70.3 million in humanitarian aid will finance programmes running from Jan. 1 until June 30 of next year, the U.N. Department on Humanitarian Affairs said in a statement.

The money would be spent on children's schooling, demobilising combatants, repatriating refugees, and supporting health centres, among other uses.

The aid call comes as the U.N. Mission in Somalia mandate ends. The U.N. force will leave Somalia by March 31 next year.

The U.N. Security Council

ordered the pullout last October because of a breakdown of security conditions in Somalia.

There are currently some 13,000 peacekeepers in Somalia. A total of 130 have been killed.

Despite the pullout, the U.N. humanitarian agencies are determined to continue humanitarian programmes whenever and wherever possible, the U.N. statement said.

"Failure to do so will result in a predictable new emergency which will, as in the past, exact a tragic toll in human lives and have severe consequences for stability in the sub-region," the statement continued.

Belgians cleared

A Belgian military court

has cleared three paratroops who served with the U.N. peacekeeping force in Somalia of manslaughter and other charges.

Lawyer Erik Carre, who represents the family of a dead Somali, Mohammad Osman, said the court ruled that the soldiers did not act outside the rules of engagement applicable to peacekeeping missions.

The three men were alleged to have committed the offences while serving with the United Nations in the southern Somali port of Kismayu, where more than 850 Belgian troops were based for one year from December 1992.

Military auditor Nicolas van Winsen told a court hearing earlier in December that military authorities were investigating 268 cases against Belgian troops, of which 58

involved involuntary homicide or injuries inflicted on Somalis.

Mr. Carre, who works with the association Lawyers Without Borders, said he thought the investigation and trial of the three paratroops had been "a show."

"There has been an acquittal so damages cannot be awarded," he told reporters outside the court room. "I am therefore obliged to make an appeal. I think I will do it."

Mr. Carre said five more paratroops would appear in court on Jan. 10 on torture charges.

The Belgian government ordered an inquiry after a Belgian radio journalist and the independent human rights group Africa rights alleged that Belgian troops based in Kismayu had killed and beaten civilians.

Muslims, Christians share Christmas spirit

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Christmas is in the air here as Muslims and the small Christian community enjoy together Santa Claus, tinsel and carols in the first celebration for decades free of Israeli occupation.

Putting aside religious differences for the festive season, even supporters of the hardline Hamas group are capturing the Christmas spirit.

At a nursery school run by an all-Christian board of directors, veiled Muslim mothers looked on as Santa Claus handed out gifts to their children.

"Many of our pupils come from Hamas and Islamic Jihad families," said Rika Tarazi, headmistress of the nursery which has a majority of Muslims.

These mothers were among the first to pay the fees for our Christmas party," she said, adding families who supported the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas had "encouraged us, and written us letters of appreciation."

Christianity came to Gaza around the 4th century, and an ancient Greek Orthodox church building in downtown Gaza city dates back to the 5th century.

Most of the one million Gazans are Muslims, while the 2,000 Christians mostly belong to the Greek Orthodox Church which observes Christmas on Jan. 7.

Other than the small 230-strong Catholic community, about 50 Baptists will celebrate Christmas here on Sunday, Dec. 25.

Like many Christians here, Ms. Tarazi was not worried about the growing influence of Hamas.

"They are a political party. They respect us and we have never had problems with them. I am not at all troubled by the thought of them pos-

sibly gaining more power."

Hamas anger has so far been directed against Israel, and there have been no known cases of anti-Christian feeling here.

The group is opposed to the autonomy deal with Israel, but is pushing to run in local municipal elections, and has won favour among many Palestinians for its charity schools and clinics.

For Ms. Tarazi's nursery, this was the first quiet Christmas, without strikes, burning tires, and gunfire that marked the years of the intifada against Israel which began late in 1987.

A huge Christmas tree was displayed in a store on the main Omar Moukhtar Street while the tiny Baptist congregation joined Western agency employees in Christmas carols.

At the Latin Patriarchate School, Father Jahl Awad, the Catholic parish priest, greeted Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat on a Christmas visit.

"We used to have smaller celebrations in the past years," said Father Awad, also the school principal.

"We never had the heart to really enjoy Christmas fully during the intifada. Now there is no more curfew, and everyone can come and go."

It was the biggest fuss the school, which has 1,000 students mostly Muslims, has ever made at Christmas time.

A huge Christmas tree stood in the front yard, bright paper lanterns and tinsel were strung across the walls. Six Santas gave Mr. Arafat a gift as a hand played the traditional song Jingle Bells.

Father Awad said that even though some of his pupils' parents were Hamas supporters, "They like the education that we give here, and we have separate Islamic and Christian religion classes."

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. wants Mideast to help fund N. Korean plan

TOKYO (AFP) — The United States is seeking financial assistance from oil-producing countries in the Middle East to help North Korea replace its existing nuclear reactors, a news report said here Friday. "We have approached some countries in the Middle East about supporting the implementation of the agreed framework by contributions, either financial or in kind," U.S. Ambassador-at-large Robert Gallucci told Japan's Kyodo News Service in an interview in Washington. North Korea signed an agreement with the United States in October in Geneva on replacing Pyongyang's graphite-moderated nuclear reactor system with light-water plants that produce less bomb-grade materials. Washington, in turn, agreed to coordinate a programme to fund the replacement reactors, as well as alternative fuel supplies. Mr. Gallucci led the U.S. delegation to the Geneva negotiations. The United States, Japan and South Korea agreed earlier this month to establish an international consortium to help North Korea convert the graphite reactor system, which will require funds of some \$4 billion.

World Bank approves Egypt irrigation loan

WASHINGTON (R) — The World Bank said Thursday it approved \$80 million in loans to assist Egypt's \$182.3 million irrigation improvement project serving 95,000 farmers in the northern Nile Delta. The World Bank money is made up of an International Development Association (IDA) credit of \$53.3 million and a \$26.7 million bank loan. "Egypt's water resources are limited and one of the project's objectives is to improve efficiency in water resources management by modernising the irrigation systems of small farmers in northern Egypt," said World Bank task manager Aliad Khan in a statement. Three irrigation areas in the governorates of Beheira and Kafu Al Sheikh will be improved by installing control structures, measuring systems and mixing stations for the reuse of drainage. Pumps and pipes will be made available for the system of canals servicing small farmers, many of whom have little more than a hectare of land each. The loan has a maturity of 20 years and five years grace. The IDA credit has a maturity of 35 years with a 10-year grace period.

Iraqi Kurds clash for first time since August

ANKARA (R) — Fighting has broken out between supporters of rival Kurdish parties in northern Iraq, killing at least five people, Iraqi Kurdish sources said on Friday. "There were tensions in the Sulaymaniah region in the past couple of days — the first since the end of August and almost exactly a month after a settlement signed on Nov. 21," Saeed Dizaee, Ankara representative of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), told Reuters. "I think about five or so Peshmerga (guerrillas) were killed, but we are not sure yet whether this was a hot-headed dispute between Peshmergas or something to do with the commanders," Mr. Dizaee said. He said KDP leader Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), were expected to meet on Friday to investigate the fighting. The KDP and PUK have shared power since elections were held in 1992. Fighting between KDP and PUK factions, as well as religious groups from the Islamic Movement of Iraq Kurdistan (IMI), erupted in the three Kurdish-controlled provinces of northern Iraq in May and in August.

Ex-BCCI official paroled on health grounds

ABU DHABI (R) — A former Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) official serving a six-year jail term in the United Arab Emirates has been given parole on health grounds, Abu Dhabi News daily said on Friday. The paper quoted the Pakistani ex-official, Zafar Iqbal Chaudhary, 54, as saying he had been given parole because of health problems since a severe heart attack four years ago. Officials were not available to confirm that Mr. Chaudhary had left prison. Mr. Chaudhary was one of 12 ex-employees of BCCI sentenced in Abu Dhabi in June on charges related to the bank's spectacular collapse in 1991. Sentences ranged from three to 14 years. Over 30 bank officials were detained after the collapse. Most have been released and one died of a heart attack in custody. An Abu Dhabi court is now hearing appeals by convicted officials against the sentences and huge civil damages, as well as an appeal by the public prosecutor against the June rulings.

Desert sands run red as hunting season starts in Egypt

EL ARISH, Egypt (AFP) — Egypt's desert sands are running red with blood as convoys of rich Gulf Arabs arrive to hunt migrating gazelle, paying big bucks to circumvent a hunting ban.

"They kill and destroy everything," complained Sheikh Muharak, a gamekeeper in Nakhli, a bedouin village in the Sinai desert.

"After the rains last week I could only find rats where normally the gazelle come to graze."

Poachers come "pretending to be tourists in the desert, in cars with servants, food, generators and cordless telecommunications even

radar," said Abdullah Hegawi, environment director in north Sinai at El Arish, about 350 kilometres south of Cairo.

Environmentalists say the survival of some species is now at stake, with guides estimating that 1,000 gazelle have been killed in just one area in the past five years.

"At least four groups have already come this year from Saudi Arabia and Qatar," he said.

In November he filmed three four-wheel-drive landrovers bringing Saudis with their dogs and hunting falcons.

He stopped them with the help of his association for the

protection of the environment and border guards.

Officially hunting is banned in the Sinai and the northwestern desert in the Marsa Matruh province bordering Libya.

But local residents, many of who gladly accept huge payouts from the hunters, say that every year "the princes" return in November and December during the migration period.

Rich Gulf Arabs, who provide Egypt with a lot of aid, come to shoot white gazelle, rabbit and bustard or catch falcons. The understaffed gamekeepers are badly equipped to stop them.

"This year we didn't issue

one tourist permit for the desert," said Issam Badr, a senior official at the government environment agency in charge of monitoring the area.

"Last year we gave out about 40 permits but there was no hunting, but the rule was broken in more than half the cases," he added.

The governor of north Sinai, Munir Shaash, said he had not given out any permits either, but blamed authorities in "high places" saying the hunters were "often escorted by Egyptian soldiers."

But according to the mayor of Makhli Ali Fridi, the governor's office was issuing per-

mits up to 1991 in exchange for funds "to spend on developing the region and protecting the environment."

Two weeks ago in Marsa Matruh a Saudi Emir Fahd Ben Mohammad Ben Abdul Aziz asked Governor Mohammad Zahir Abdul to rent a game reserve for \$250,000 a year, a regional spokesman Abdul Rahman Attia said.

The governor promised to pass the matter on to Cairo and offered him "two days of safari" in the province, but the emir asked for two weeks.

He has been staying in a hotel awaiting a reply, with a convoy of 29 vehicles camped

in the desert.

Hunters are often stopped with false permits or without licences.

A convoy of Kuwaitis and Omanis were stopped recently closed to the Sinai oasis on the Libyan border and expelled, a police source said. No legal procedures were taken.

"It is a difficult political question, but now we can't ignore it any longer because the survival of the animals is at stake," said Marwat Morosgavay, director general at Giza Zoo in Cairo.

In the past five years about 1,000 gazelles have been killed by 120 Gulf hunters in the Marsa Matruh province.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 Pollards
17:30 Un Pour Tous
18:00 "Le Temple Du Karnak"
18:30 Les Intrepides
19:00 News in French
19:15 Grands Galops
19:20 The Nanny: "The Christmas Story"
20:00 Innovations
20:30 Quantum Leap
21:10 Murder She Wrote
22:00 News in English
23:20 Feature film: "One Magic Christmas"
23:59 The Christmas Miracle: "Christmas Carols"
00:30 Major Dead
01:00 Christmas Ceremonies from the Vatican

PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fajr
06:23 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:35 Dhuhr
14:19 'Asr
16:41 Maghrib
18:04 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefel, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590,
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be sunny with temperatures rising further and winds southeasterly light to moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 2 / 15

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Aqaba 8 / 21
Deserts 1 / 16
Jordan Valley 9 / 20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 20 Humidity
readings: Amman 58 per cent,
Aqaba 47 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bahjat Bader 849362
Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab 602507
Dr. Sa'ad Ali 788285
Dr. Yahya Abdul Salam 736072
First pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairokh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644045
Shimciani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Akram Al Momani 248795
Alquds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Yahya Al Tarifi 981520

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630221
Hotel Complaints 608900
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 608900
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information
(directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 63101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 774111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power
Company 634381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldil Maternity, J. Amn. 6428146
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642363
Maibis, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664714
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Masdar Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 66112157
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7710113
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 7711126
Army, Marfa 8916115
Queen Alia Hospital 60224030
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
Ibn Saud Hospital (09)903560
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princeza Basma Hospital (02)735555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)727275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Franco Hays Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:45 Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
06:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:15 Aqaba (RJ)
09:55 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 New Delhi (RJ)
10:15 Beirut (RJ)
10:25 Colombo (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:50 Cairo (RJ)
17:55 London, Berlin (RJ)
17:55 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:20 Vienna (OS)

15:45 Rome, Larnaca (AZ)
18:15 Dubai (EK)
19:30 Suma (IV)
19:45 Larnaca (CY)
20:20 Beirut (ME)
21:55 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:00 Cairo (MS)
22:45 London (BA)
23:05 Athens (OA)
23:20 Amsterdam (KL)

02:35 London (BA)
02:40 Athens (OA)

RUJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg

Apple 700-800
Banana 650
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Cabbage 220-120
Carrot 280-180
Cauliflower 450-300
Cauliflower 340-200
Cucumbers (large) 300-200
Cucumbers (small) 370-240
Eggplant 540-400
Garlic 200-180
Grape Fruit 200-180
Lemon 250-180
Marrow (large) 480-340
Marrow (small) 480-340
Onion (green) 380-240
Onion (dry) 440-340
Orange 520-340
Pepper (hot) 540-400
Pepper (sweet) 540-400
Potato 340-240
Radish 240-180
Spinach 340-240
String Beans 1000-700
Tomato 500-240



His Majesty King Hussein confers Al Kawkab Medal of the First Order on visiting Malaysian Minister of Higher Education Suleiman Haji Daoud (Petra photo)

Malaysian minister ends visit today

AMMAN (J.T.) — Malaysian Minister of Higher Education Suleiman Haji Daoud today ends his several-day visit to Jordan after meeting His Majesty King Hussein and holding talks with Jordanian government leaders.

Dr. Daoud, who Friday was accompanied by Jordanian officials on a visit to Petra, was received in audience by the King on Thursday and conveyed to him greetings from the Malaysian Monarch, and voiced Malaysia's support for the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, Jordan's peace efforts and the country's moderate policies under the leadership of the King and the Hashemite family.

Dr. Daoud also voiced his country's deep appreciation of the level of higher education in Jordan of which large numbers of Malaysian students are now benefitting. King Hussein conferred on the visiting Minister Al Kawkab Medal of the First Order in the presence of Chief of the Royal Court Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Minister of Higher Education Rafea Saoud.

Earlier Thursday Dr. Daoud and Dr. Saoud held official talks at the Ministry of Higher Education to chart plans for further promoting relations in educational and cultural fields.

Discussion covered mainly the exchange of scholarships to students from both countries, the exchange of publications and educational curricula, as well as visits by faculty to teach at Malaysian and Jordanian universities.

Dr. Saoud said after the talks that the two sides have decided to enrol additional numbers of Malaysian students at Jordanian universities to study Arabic language and Islamic religion.

The Malaysian Minister also met Education Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh and discussed educational cooperation.

He also visited the University of Jordan and discussed educational programmes and met Malaysian students studying there.

Malaysian students are studying at AL Al Bayt, Muta, Yarmouk and the University of Jordan.

Queen attends Rula Nabeel recital

AMMAN (J.T.) — The SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan Wednesday night presented a piano recital by Rula Nabeel at the Royal Cultural Centre under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, honorary chairperson of the SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan, to support SOS children throughout the Kingdom, according to a Royal Court statement.

Ms. Nabeel, a 1983 winner of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation's Royal Endowment for Culture and Education scholarship to pursue advanced music studies in Germany, has given many highly acclaimed performances in various European cities.

At Wednesday night's recital, she played Mozart, Satie, Beethoven and Brahms and pieces by a young Jordanian composer, Tarek Younis.

Ms. Nabeel accompanied 11-year-old vocalist Raad Rizk in a performance of selected Christmas carols. In a tribute to all SOS children, Rula Nabeel and Raad Rizk presented a musical piece, "A Cry," composed by Tarek Younis, with the lyrics written by Raad Rizk.

SOS Jordan have completed several projects in Jordan to provide orphaned children with a healthy family environment and to promote their physical and emotional development and well-being.

SOS projects educate and train their children and youth to become self-reliant and productive members of the community.

The SOS bakery and pastry shop generate income by producing and selling their products to consumers in the SOS villages and in Amman, and a well-equipped vocational centre trains SOS youth in carpentry and caters to private orders.

In addition to two children's villages in Amman and Aqaba, officially opened by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, who visit the children every Eid, SOS have established separate youth houses for boys and girls, and kindergartens and supermarkets in Amman and Aqaba.

Following the performance, Queen Noor spoke with the three artists and thanked them for their very high standard of musicianship, the Royal Court statement said. The Queen expressed her pride in them and their achievements, and looked forward to celebrating a great future with them, the statement said.

Queen Noor was received by President of SOS Jordan, Jafar Toukan, Vice President Amal Sajdi, National Director Lina Kopyt and members of the board, according to the statement.

JNRCS, Dutch Society to launch two-year programme in Maan

MAAN (Petra) — Mohammad Hadid, head of the Jordanian National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) said here Wednesday that his society, in cooperation with the Dutch Red Cross Society, will soon initiate a two-year programme in the Maan region for the benefit of the local residents.

Speaking at a ceremony for the inauguration of a laboratory at the society branch in Maan, Dr. Hadid said the programme, which would be financed by the Netherlands, would be launched at the villages of Sadafah, Rajef, Dalaa and Abu Mahtoub and it would entail providing primary health care for the local residents and some foodstuffs for the needy families.

Referring to the Maan branch as one of the most active among the JNRCS's branches around the country, Dr. Hadid said that the branch will soon be supplied by an X-ray unit and other necessities as well as additional beds and hearing aids for the needy patients.

Dr. Hadid announced the donation of JD 10,000 from the society to the Maan branch to help finance the construction of warehouses which would be let to earn an income for the society to finance part of its operations.

He also promised to supply the branch's clinic with additional equipment.

Dr. Hadid outlined the general services of the JNRCS and the medical services offered at its Al Hilal Hospital in Amman.

Government to raise vehicle insurance

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government plans to raise vehicle insurance rates by an average 33 per cent noting that insurance rates in neighbouring countries have also recently been hiked.

A statement Friday said that the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Federation of Jordanian Insurance Companies came to an agreement to raise the rate of compulsory insurance.

But the statement said that 60 per cent of the cars in Jordan which are privately owned will pay an increase of 25 per cent on their annual insurance premiums.

The decision for the increase followed a study of the rate of car accidents involving different categories of vehicles and in light of the recent insurance hikes in neighbouring countries, said the statement.

During a debate in Parliament over the performance of the insurance companies operating in Jordan and during discussions that preceded the endorsement of a law on insurance companies last May, the government had then said that reports that insurance rates would be increased were groundless.

The prime minister told the Lower House then that there was no truth to reports that premiums would be increased by 50 per cent and that the government was negotiating with the insurance companies over studies to better organise the insurance industry.

The announcement Friday was seen by some analysts as a way to appease the insurance companies which repeatedly complained that they were sustaining losses that forced them to demand that the government interfere otherwise they would stop issuing liability policies.

A total of 17 insurance companies have been operating in Jordan for the past 10 years and the government has since then allowed no new insurance company to enter the market.

According to the new arrangements announced Friday, the insurance companies are now forced to raise to JD7,500 from JD5,000 the sum paid in compensation for the death of an individual in a car accident, and to raise medical expense coverage to JD3,000 from JD2,000.

The maximum amount which an insurance company would pay for a single accident in compensation for death and material damage would be JD150,000 up from JD100,000.

Pricing dispute threatens cut in dairy products supply

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Ministry of Supply and dairy producers remained in a deadlock over the weekend in a dispute over prices, and prospects were unclear whether the dairies would make good a warning that they would stop producing yogurt and other milk products as of Wednesday unless they were allowed to raise prices.

The dairy owners complain that the prices of their products as set by the Ministry of Supply no longer reflect real cost of production and say that they are absorbing daily losses by maintaining their output. They also point out that the last time the authorities agreed to a rise in prices was in 1990 and that production costs, including prices of packaging materials, have gone up three or four times since then.

The dairy owners, who do not have an association of their own, have been engaged in negotiations with the Ministry of Supply since October, when they approached the ministry with a demand to raise prices. A committee set up by the ministry suggested last week that prices be raised nominally, but the dairies have rejected the recommendation saying that the proposed increase did not reflect the actual cost in production costs since 1990.

Omar Hourani, general manager of the Danish Jordanian Dairy Company, said his factory, which produces about 30 tonnes of yogurt and labaneh in winter and about 40 tonnes in summer, would continue to suffer losses on a daily basis if it continued production of the milk products.

"The cost of plastic containers have gone up at least four times since 1990, and wages have also gone up," Mr. Hourani told the Jordan Times. "We are not threatening to strike or any similar action when we say we would stop production on Dec. 28 if we are not allowed to raise prices. We only want to avoid losses and to realise our cost."

The proposed increase of five fils per 300 grammes and 10 fils per 500 grammes of yogurt is not acceptable, Mr. Hourani said. "We have informed the ministry of our rejection of the suggested increase and have sought a higher increase," he said. He did not say how much increase the dairy owners were seeking.

Mr. Hourani also argued that a proposed by the ministry that a new committee be set up to study the market once again would only lead to more losses for his company. "We have first approached the ministry in October, and it took them two months to come up with their findings while we suffered losses in the two months. If a new committee is set up, it would also take another two or three months while we continue to suffer losses."

"We need an immediate decision on the issue. Otherwise, we have no choice but to switch off our machinery on Dec. 28 and focus only on producing fruit juices until such time our just demand is met."

Officials said the Ministry of Supply was anxious not to allow any major increase in the prices of yogurt and other milk products if only because of the high consumption of dairy products by the low-income groups.

"Obviously, an increase in the prices of such items would only add to complaints that cost of living is rising in the country while earnings have remained largely stagnant," said an official who preferred anonymity. "The government is as anxious as anyone to resolve the crisis on a rational basis, but there is the issue of cost of living to take into consideration."

There are 10 major dairy firms in Jordan producing about 150 to 170 tonnes of milk products every day in winter and more than 200 tonnes in summer. But not everyone of them has made up their mind to stop production unless the prices are raised.

Jamal Abu Seneh, financial manager of the Jordan Dairy Company in Zarqa, said his company had not taken a final decision whether to suspend production. "It is a management decision to be taken in consultations with the shareholders," Mr. Abu Seneh told the Jordan Times.

Prince Ali celebrates 19th birthday

AMMAN (Petra) — H.R.H. Prince Ali Ben Al Hussein Friday celebrated his 19th birthday.

Born in Amman, on Dec. 23, 1975, the Prince was educated at the Islamic Scientific School, the American Community School and the Amman Baccalaureate School.

Later Prince Ali pursued his education in the United Kingdom and the United States.

On Dec. 19, Prince Ali graduated from the Military Academy at Sandhurst following one-year's training. The graduation was attended by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor.

In addition Prince Ali has had several military training courses with the Jordanian Armed Forces.



Jordan takes another stride in fertilizer production

By a Jordan Times staff reporter

AMMAN — Another major step has been taken towards turning Jordan into a major fertilizer producing country with the signing of a \$60 million contract to build a compound fertilizer plant at Aqaba.

A consortium of Japanese and French companies, Chiyoda and Kribs, will build the plant in 27.5 months starting January 1995 under a contract signed recently by the Nippon Jordan Fertilizer Company.

It is the second such project to be built in Jordan with foreign participation. The Indo-Jordanian chemical company, which will produce phosphoric acid at a \$120-million plant being built in Shidiyah, is the first one.

The Nippon Jordan Fertilizer Company is a joint venture between a Japanese group led by the National Federation of Agricultural Associations and including Mitsubishi Chemical Corporation, Asahi Industries Company and Mitsubishi Corporation and the Jordanian Phosphate Mines Company and the Arab Potash Company.

As the name implies, the National Federation of Agricultural Associations is an umbrella organisation for the Japanese farming community and is directly linked to the use of fertilizers in the country.

The Japanese side would hold 60 per cent of the \$24 million equity of the Nippon Jordan Fertilizer Company and the Jordanian side will hold the rest.

After the signing of the contract to the Chiyoda-Kribs consortium, the equity holders are now negotiating financing for the plant. The Japanese share of the financing is expected to come from Tokyo's Eximbank while the Jordanian share is being raised by a local group led by the Arab Bank, said Mohammad Al Karaki, deputy director-general of the company.

Although the accord was signed last month, the 27.5 month deadline for handing over the completed project to the company by the builders begins only from the date on which a down payment is made.

In addition to the \$60 million turnkey project, there will be other local input into project before it starts producing an average of 300,000 tonnes of compound fertilizers and diammonium phosphate, said Mr. Karaki.

The entire production of the plant will be exported to Japan. The output of the Indo-Jordan chemical company will be bought by Indian importers.

The fertilizer plant will be located in a 55,000-square metre plot near the industrial complex of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company in Aqaba and will employ around 100 people in the initial stage after it is commissioned, said Mr. Karaki.

The area enjoys the status of a free zone, and therefore the plant will have all exemptions granted to firms operating in a free zone. The area where the Indo-Jordanian chemical plant is built is also designated a free zone.

The Aqaba plant will consume 80,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid, nearly 40,000 tonnes of sulphuric acid and ammonia.

The joint ventures with Indian and Japanese companies come in line with a gradual Jordanian switch to producing and marketing fertilizers from the Kingdom's traditional exports of the raw material — rock phosphates — to adopt to the changing pattern in the international market.

The Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and the Arab Potash Company, which collectively account for the bulk of Jordan's exports, are discussing several other similar projects with other companies.

WHAT'S GOING ON CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

- ★ Bani Hamida Christmas Display with a variety of small gift items at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, First Circle, Rahbow Street.
- ★ Plastic art exhibition by Laila Kawash at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings on leather by Iraqi artist Rakan Dabbab at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.
- ★ Art exhibition by Ammar Khammash and Fuad Mimi at Instituto Cervantes (the Spanish Cultural Centre).
- ★ Exhibition of works by Mahmud Obaidi at Darat Al Funun. Also showing an exhibition of portraits by Fahrelnissa Zeid and the exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tamam Shammout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

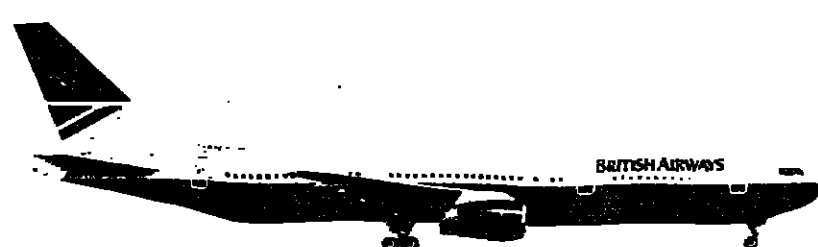
Iraq assails Kuwaiti and Saudi policies

(Continued from page 12)

track," it added.

Russia, China and France have been calling for an easing of the sanctions since Baghdad recognised Kuwait's sovereignty last month, but the United States and Britain insist on full compliance with all other U.N. resolutions.

Al Thawra said Iraq was pinning hope on what it termed "The Russian whale," now aided by both France and China, and their efforts to isolate the United States on the Security Council.



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Indian premier moves to mend congress before fresh elections

NEW DELHI (R) — Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, freed of three ministers linked to scandals, is planning to reshuffle his cabinet to mend party divisions before crucial state polls, party leaders said Friday.

Mr. Rao sacked Health Minister B. Shankaranand, Food Minister Kalpana Rai and Junior Rural Development Minister Rameshwar Thakur Thursday.

Mr. Shankaranand and Mr. Thakur were linked to a \$1.3 billion stock market scandal in 1992 while Mr. Rai was accused of wrongdoing in a sugar import scam earlier this year.

All three had offered to resign last week but Mr. Rao handed the resignations to President Shankar Dayal Sharma Thursday.

"He has acted at last to save the congress from splitting," a senior minister told

Reuters, referring to rising pressure on Mr. Rao from within the party to rid the cabinet of tainted ministers and deprive the opposition of an electoral weapon.

Mr. Rai was indicated by an official inquiry which charged him with helping delay sugar imports for six months until last May. By that time world prices had soared, costing the government hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. Shankaranand and Mr. Thakur were named in a parliamentary probe into the stock market scandal in which bankers and brokers colluded to siphon funds, mainly from government securities, to the then booming Bombay Stock Exchange.

The opposition, which paralysed parliament this week over its demands for action against scandal-tainted ministers, said it had forced the

ministers' exit and demanded Mr. Rao step down.

"Compromise is not confined to individuals any more. The entire Congress Party is corrupt," said Lal Krishan Advani, president of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. "The prime minister must resign to seek a fresh mandate."

Mr. Advani said corruption would be the opposition's main electoral plank in crucial polls in several states in February.

Mr. Rao needs to survive elections in Congress-ruled Maharashtra and Gujarat, as well as in opposition-ruled Bihar and Orissa states to keep his hold on the party.

But Congress leaders were pessimistic about at least three of the states, saying they might scrape through in Maharashtra.

"Our main concern is infighting," said Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil.

"Without party unity nothing can be achieved."

He was referring to criticism of Mr. Rao's leadership by his rival, Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh, and Civil Supplies Minister A.K. Antony.

Last week, Mr. Antony offered to resign over Mr. Rao's handling of the two scandals. Newspapers said Mr. Singh had also offered to step down but there was no official confirmation.

Congress deputies said an early cabinet reshuffle could help Mr. Rao win them over.

Some senior cabinet ministers have criticised Finance Minister Mammohan Singh's economic reforms as a factor in the Congress Party's rout in recent state polls.

Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee was quoted by senior deputies as leading the chorus of criticism against Mr. Singh.



Mexican state and federal police remove road block and barbed wire blocking a road near Soyaltepec, Chiapas. The road blocks were placed by Zapatista rebels who on Dec. 19 took up positions in 38 Chiapas towns (AFP photo)

Mexico rebels hide, but say they won't run

LARRAINZAR, Mexico (R) — Army troops forced Maya Indian rebels to take cover in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas Thursday but the guerrilla fighters said they would not be driven back into their jungle strongholds.

Hundreds of soldiers in a column of trucks and light tanks mounted with heavy machine guns rumbled northwards into the strategic central Chiapas town of Larrainzar while military patrols guarded against rebel movements elsewhere in the state.

The army column, led by two generals, was met by dozens of applauding town residents as they moved into Larrainzar's main square and regained control three days after it was occupied by guerrillas of the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

There was no fighting because Zapatista rebels posted on the outskirts of the town took cover when the army approached.

The Zapatistas occupied Larrainzar and several other Chiapas towns Monday after leaving their jungle bases and slipping through army lines, but the military has steadily regained control without either side firing a single bullet.

"Now is not the time to count the dead," said Apollinar Sahabo, administrative chief of the troubled Bwiza suburb where most of the violence has been concentrated. "My priority is to make the Hutus and foreigners who abandoned their houses and goods which risk being destroyed by criminals to return," he added.

Bujumbura Mayor Pic Niyankundiye told state radio late Thursday it was calm enough for people to return to Bwiza to guard their houses and added: "For those who may still be afraid, I would like to say that administrative and security officials from Bwiza will pick them up and accompany them to their homes."

Dozens of government troops patrolled Bwiza, allowing traffic to enter the northwest district but not permitting out people trying to flee in cars piled with their possessions, witnesses said.

Outside Bwiza, markets opened and taxis were back on the street after a dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed from Wednesday night appeared to have helped in restoring calm.

On Thursday, the U.N. Security Council called for a halt to violence in Burundi, fearing a repeat of the mass killings that gripped neighbouring Rwanda earlier this year.

A statement expressed concern over "the escalation of violence in Burundi, both in Bujumbura and in the countryside, which threatens to further destabilise an already fragile situation and could endanger the stability of the sub-region."

The pilot agreed to fly to Taiwan, he said. As the plane flew toward the island, someone on the plane punched the hijacker, knocking him to the floor where he was overpowered, the official said.

Details of the fight were unclear and it was not known if the man was overpowered by the crew or passengers.

Taiwan state radio said the island's aviation authorities had received a hijack signal from an airliner approaching from China.

The plane changed its course and gained height as it approached Taiwan but did not cross into Taiwan airspace, the radio said. "The mainland flight which made a detour emitted a 7500 hijack signal," it said.

After the hijacker was overpowered, the plane returned to Xiamen where it landed at the airport at 2.45 p.m. (0645 GMT), the official said.

Police arrested and took away the lone hijacker, whose identity was not known, he said.

No injuries were reported among the other 52 passengers and 11 crew aboard the plane, a commercial flight on lease to one of China's many regional airlines from the China General Aviation Corp, he said.

"An incident has occurred," an official of the Xiamen Airport Police Department said by telephone. "But I cannot reveal anything."

The Civil Aeronautics Administration in Beijing declined to comment. Twelve planes have been hijacked from China to Taiwan since April 1993. The island is separated from China by 220 kilometres of the Taiwan Strait.

The last plane hijacked was in June 1994. China and Taiwan, rivals since the Nationalists fled to the island after losing the Chinese Civil War in 1949, agreed late this year on terms for the return of hijackers after Beijing conceded Taipei reserve the right to keep some hijackers if it finds they have valid political or religious motives.

Hijackers in China can face a maximum penalty of death.

However, both sides agreed that any hijacking that did not leave its own territory's airspace would be handled solely by local authorities.

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Gump, Fiction take Golden Globe nominee honours

LOS ANGELES (R) — The films Forrest Gump and Pulp Fiction took top honours in nominations for the 52nd annual Golden Globe Awards announced by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

Forrest Gump, which has won seven nominations including best actor for Tom Hanks while Pulp Fiction received six including best actor for John Travolta and best director for Quentin Tarantino.

The Golden Globes, to be presented in Beverly Hills on Jan. 21, are seen as a harbinger of who will win Hollywood's most prestigious awards, the Oscars. These are presented in late March.

Tarantino, whose black comedy of Los Angeles hoodlums and hit men earned almost \$60 million at the U.S. box office, earlier this year won the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival in France.

In recent weeks the upstart filmmaker picked up top director awards from the Los Angeles and New York Film Critics Associations and the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures.

Pulp Fiction also gained Tarantino a Golden Globe for best screenplay. Samuel Jackson won a best supporting actor nomination for his role as a Bible-bashing thug and Uma Thurman best support-actor nomination for his role as a Bible-bashing thug and Uma Thurman best supporting actress for a gangster moll. The movie was also nominated for best picture in the drama category.

Forrest Gump, the Paramount Pictures release about a simpleton's brushes with history, was nominated for best picture-drama. Robin Wright received a nomination for best actress. Gary Sinise for best supporting actor, Robert Zemeckis for best director, Eric Roth for best screenplay and Alan Silverman for best original score.

"Sino-foreign marriages rising 22% a year"

BEIJING (R) — Marriages between Chinese and foreigners have been rising at an average of 22 per cent a year in Beijing since 1982, with most wedding for love and no longer for money, the Xinhua News Agency said Monday.

Since a registration centre for multi-national marriages was set up in Beijing in 1982, a total of 2,387 Beijing residents have wed foreigners. Xinhua quoted the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Civil Affairs as saying the number of such marriages has been growing at a rate of 22 per cent a year since 1982 — when there were only 120 such couples, it said. Most overseas partners are from Japan, the United States, France, Russia and Korea, the bureau said.

"Christmas here is different from Europe," he said, because it falls in the middle of the southern hemisphere summer and the annual holidays, when most of the country practically closes down for two or three weeks.

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Unarmed White House intruder arrested

WASHINGTON (R) — An unarmed homeless man slipped through an open gate onto the White House grounds Wednesday evening but was arrested seconds later, the Secret Service said late Thursday.

Secret Service spokesman Jaime Cagigas said there was no danger to President Bill Clinton at any time.

Wednesday's incident followed on the heels of four security incidents on or near the White House grounds since mid-September which have sparked fresh concerns

about security and the possible need to block off wider parts of one of Washington's most-visited tourist sites.

Mr. Cagigas noted the Secret Service handled about half a dozen cases of "fence-hoppers" and others trying to get onto the White House grounds each year.

He said the man, whose name was not immediately available, was arrested shortly after sauntering through the southwest gate of the White House compound which had opened to let a vehicle enter at about 6 p.m. est (2300 GMT).

He said the man had been interviewed extensively and would be charged with unlawful entry.

"There was no threat at all against the president. He was unarmed. There wasn't any violence," Mr. Cagigas said adding the man appeared to have no particular motive for his act.

Another homeless being shot by police on the sidewalk in front of the White House Tuesday. Mr. Corniel had confronted and threatened police with a hunting knife.

'Hurd set to quit in 1995'

LONDON (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd is set to stand down from the Conservative government in the middle of next year, said Friday's Daily Telegraph.

But before he leaves, Mr. Hurd is eager to ensure the safe withdrawal of British troops from Bosnia, and to establish an orderly debate on Europe in the Tory party, said the paper, which carried an opinion piece of Mr. Hurd setting out the government's European stance.

In it Hurd confirmed that Britain favoured developing the Western European Union as the "European pillar" of NATO and called for strengthened ties with European allies, especially France.

The changed strategic landscape since the fall of the Berlin Wall had raised new questions, said Mr. Hurd.

"Some of the answers remain the same. NATO will remain the bedrock of our security in the future, as it has been in the past," he said.

"But there is good reason to build up the Western European Union, as the European pillar of NATO," he added. "There is a clear case from our own point of view for strengthening our ties with our European allies and especially with France."

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The battle of the Nordic Santa Claus

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Everyone knows that Santa Claus lives at the North Pole. But just where Father Christmas has his home is a matter of dispute among the Nordic countries of Sweden, Greenland, Finland and Norway.

Gesunda, Sweden (250 kilometres northwest of Stockholm) claims to be the year-round home of Santa. According to Santa World, Santa chose the Gesunda countryside for his permanent residence, after decades of searching for the ideal place to live.

Here Santa keeps a house, a workshop, and his animals — reindeer, of course. Visitors can stroll through the tree-lined park and small alleys, where store windows display figurines from Swedish fairytales.

In the light of divisions over Europe, and the suspension of nine Tory MPs who rebelled over European policy last month, Mr. Hurd echoed earlier pleas by Prime Minister John Major for party unity.

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Looting follows Burundi ethnic clashes

BUJUMBURA (R) — Looting broke out in abandoned parts of Burundi's capital Bujumbura where up to 30 people were killed in ethnic clashes between Hutus and Tutsis this week, but authorities said Friday calm was being restored.

"Now is not the time to count the dead," said Apollinar Sahabo, administrative chief of the troubled Bwiza suburb where most of the violence has been concentrated.

"My priority is to make the Hutus and foreigners who abandoned their houses and goods which risk being destroyed by criminals to return," he added.

Bujumbura Mayor Pic Niyankundiye told state radio late Thursday it was calm enough for people to return to Bwiza to guard their houses and added:

"For those who may still be afraid, I would like to say that administrative and security officials from Bwiza will pick them up and accompany them to their homes."

Dozens of government troops patrolled Bwiza, allowing traffic to enter the northwest district but not permitting out people trying to flee in cars piled with their possessions, witnesses said.

Outside Bwiza, markets opened and taxis were back on the street after a dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed from Wednesday night appeared to have helped in restoring calm.

On Thursday, the U.N. Security Council called for a halt to violence in Burundi, fearing a repeat of the mass killings that gripped neighbouring Rwanda earlier this year.

A statement expressed concern over "the escalation of violence in Burundi, both in Bujumbura and in the countryside, which threatens to further destabilise an already fragile situation and could endanger the stability of the sub-region."

The pilot agreed to fly to Taiwan, he said. As the plane flew toward the island, someone on the plane punched the hijacker, knocking him to the floor where he was overpowered, the official said.

Details of the fight were unclear and it was not known if the man was overpowered by the crew or passengers.

Taiwan state radio said the island's aviation authorities had received a hijack signal from an airliner approaching from China.

The plane changed its course and gained height as it approached Taiwan but did not cross into Taiwan airspace, the radio said. "The mainland flight which made a detour emitted a 7500 hijack signal," it said.

After the hijacker was overpowered, the plane returned to Xiamen where it landed at the airport at 2.45 p.m. (0645 GMT), the official said.

Police arrested and took away the lone hijacker, whose identity was not known, he said.

No injuries were reported among the other 52 passengers and 11 crew aboard the plane, a commercial flight on lease to one of China's many regional airlines from the China General Aviation Corp, he said.

"An incident has occurred," an official of the Xiamen Airport Police Department said by telephone. "But I cannot reveal anything."

The Civil Aeronautics Administration in Beijing declined to comment. Twelve planes have been hijacked from China to Taiwan since April 1993. The island is separated from China by 220 kilometres of the Taiwan Strait.

The last plane hijacked was in June 1994. China and Taiwan, rivals since the Nationalists fled to the island after losing the Chinese Civil War in 1949, agreed late this year on terms for the return of hijackers after Beijing conceded Taipei reserve the right to keep some hijackers if it finds they have valid political or religious motives.

Hijackers in China can face a maximum penalty of death.

However, both sides agreed that any hijacking that did not leave its own territory's airspace would be handled solely by local authorities.

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Brinkley weds millionaire on mountaintop

TELLURIDE, Colorado (R) — Supermodel Christie Brinkley schussed down the sunny slopes of a Rocky Mountain resort in a cream-coloured mohair dress Thursday to marry the man with whom she survived a helicopter crash earlier this year.

Brinkley, who divorced pop star Billy Joel last August, was wedded to millionaire oil heir and developer Ricky Taubman at Telluride's mid-mountain lodge in the U.S. west in front of hundreds of spectators dressed in 1930s-era ski outfits. Under sunny skies, the couple skied to the wedding site from the resort's top of the world lift overlooking Bear Creek Pass at about 12,000 feet (3,600 metres) above sea level.

"If you're going to marry a beautiful woman it better be in a beautiful place," Mr. Taubman said. Dozens of unmixed guests looked on from a respectful distance in this posh resort town where celebrities are more the norm than the rarity. "They (the wedding couple) are local royalty and are treated as such," said Tricia Bradley, a Telluride resident who watched the wedding. The couple celebrated the ceremony at a reception following the wedding but did not reveal their honeymoon destination. Last winter the longtime model, 40, and Mr. Taubman, 46, survived the crash of his helicopter while on a heli-skiing trip at Telluride along with four other passengers, who also survived. Brinkley, who was the inspiration for Joel's hit song Uptown Girl, has a daughter with him and Mr. Taubman has a son from a previous marriage.

Both sides say they will not be the first to open fire. However, with rebel and army units now so close to each other and in continual movement, tensions are running high.

The crisis has already helped push Mexico's financial markets into chaos and handed President Ernesto Zedillo a major crisis just three weeks after he took power.

Both the stock market and the national currency have plummeted this week, increasing pressure on Mr. Zedillo to resolve the Chiapas issue by either stifling the uprising or forcing open peace negotiations.

Zapatista chiefs say talks are possible only if Mr. Robledo resigns as state governor and Zedillo recognises the parallel "rebel government" of Chiapas opposition leader Amado Avendaño.

"Mr. Zedillo has promised huge investment to tackle the crushing poverty of Chiapas' indigenous communities but has so far refused to bow to the Zapatistas' political demands."

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"Mr. Zedillo has promised huge



Chechen volunteers load a truck on the way to Petropavlovskaya (20-km north-east of Grozny) where heavy fighting has been registered during the last days. Rebel Chechen leader

Dzhokhar Dudayev called Wednesday for international pressure on Moscow to halt its offensive on its breakaway republic but Russian troops pursued their attacks (AFP photo)

Unhappy Russian troops man Chechenya borders

SERNOVODSK, Russia (R) — The Russian colonel glanced wearily at his bedraggled troops manning a checkpoint on the border with breakaway Chechenya and spat in disgust.

"It is absolutely clear to me that this is a senseless war. I was in Afghanistan and I know what it means to fight a whole nation," he said.

Many of the ordinary Russian soldiers guarding the roads leading into Chechenya from the neighbouring western Republic of Ingushetia seem less than content with their lot.

The conscripts, who spend the night in freezing foxholes near the road, can only gaze enviously at their companions from the elite police Spetsnaz troops who are rotated regularly and sleep in warm tents.

The young soldiers, who could be seen shivering outside in sub-zero temperatures, were distinctly unhappy.

"We live in complete darkness here. We don't have television, we don't see the newspapers. We don't know what is happening," said Andrei, a 19-year-old infantryman.

As he spoke, Russian troops in heavy trucks drove past in the direction of the capital Grozny, under heavy attack from air force jets. Two attack helicopters roared overhead in pursuit.

The sound of distant explosions could be heard continually from the east. One officer said they were blasts from tank and Howitzer rounds.

A few kilometres farther north, Russian troops on one of the side-roads leading to

Grozny were stopping every car and checking for weapons.

"Last night, a military truck going through a field near the road, blew up on a Chechen mine and a colonel was killed. The driver lost his legs," said a Spetsnaz soldier.

An army major at the checkpoint turned away reporters after five minutes, saying he supported the Kremlin's decision to send in troops to crush Chechenya's three-year independence bid.

"It should have been done a long time ago. We will sort things out here for sure," he said as more distant explosions could be heard.

The Russian soldiers must also deal with a hostile local population.

"We did not want this but once the war is here we have to fight. We know what we

are dying for," said Sait, a 45-year-old Chechen in the village of Sernovodsk, just inside the neighbouring region of Ingushetia.

Sait, rubbing his unshaven chin, said local men were going out on night raids to harass the Russian troops.

"Even if they take Grozny, the soldiers will have to leave their tanks to urinate and then they will be killed," he said.

The local mufti, or religious leader, said he and the other elders in the village fully supported the holy war which Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev had declared on Moscow.

"We have only one choice. To win or to die," said one elderly man as he listened to the mufti delivering a prayer condemning the Russian troops.

Italy begins search for way out of crisis

ROME (R) — President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro began the search for a way out of Italy's deep political crisis Friday with ousted Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi piling the pressure on him to opt for a snap election.

Mr. Scalfaro, who must decide whether to dissolve parliament or seek a possible successor to Mr. Berlusconi, started formal consultations by meeting one of his two surviving predecessors as head of state, 86-year-old Giovanni Leone.

An official statement said Mr. Scalfaro would meet former President Francesco Cossiga at five p.m. (1600 GMT).

The crisis then enters the freezer for Christmas. Mr. Scalfaro's soundings on how to end the turmoil resume on Dec. 27 when he will start talks with speakers of both houses of parliament and political party leaders.

Mr. Berlusconi, his centre-right government wrecked just seven months into office, quit Thursday rather than face defeat in a vote in parliament on three on-confidence motions, one of them sponsored

by his rebel coalition partner the Northern League.

The 58-year-old media mogul said Friday that he had given Mr. Scalfaro clear message at his resignation meeting that Italy must return to the ballot box fast and leave him as caretaker prime minister in the run-up to polls.

"I said very clearly that I would consider it a mistake to change the composition of the government for the brief period which separates us from these necessary elections," Mr. Berlusconi told a news conference.

Mr. Scalfaro, 76, is the ultimate arbiter in Italian political crises as head of state.

He is widely believed to oppose elections only nine months into parliament's five-year term and to prefer first to try to form a government. Italy's 54th since World War II, from the forces in the current legislature.

Outgoing Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, a League moderate who has openly dissented from party leader

Umberto Bossi's break with Mr. Berlusconi, said Friday that Mr. Scalfaro thought snap elections "would be a catastrophe".

"You can't dissolve parliament because a government falls," Mr. Maroni told reporters. "An innovative, new institutional solution must be found that will allow a new government to be born."

"Something has got to be pulled out of the hat," he said.

Mr. Berlusconi's stormy coalition between his Forza Italia party, the federalist League and the far right National Alliance stormed to triumph in general elections in March under a new, mainly majority system.

Mr. Bossi's defection, branded a betrayal of voters by Mr. Berlusconi, has sharply divided the League, with Mr. Maroni leading a large group opposed to his plan to go into a government that would involve the ex-communist Democratic Party of the Left.

Mr. Berlusconi made clear he hoped the internal tension would eventually topple Mr. Bossi.

"I hope the many merits of the League can continue to be appreciated by people," if the League changes its political direction, "there's a review that could also lead to a change of leadership," he said.

Mr. Bossi told Italian television he had brought down Mr. Berlusconi because "it was necessary to stop this kind of Peronism, this kind of little personal dictatorship."

Mr. Berlusconi, asked to respond to the remark, told the news conference: "Bossi must be talking about Peroni beer, it's the only Peroni he knows about". Peroni is a popular brand of Italian beer.

The current parliament is seriously splintered and few political analysts believe any alternative coalition to Mr. Berlusconi's shattered alliance could last long.

One alternative, a broad-based transitional government led by a non-partisan premier, had strong backing in an opinion poll published Friday. The Directa Institute said 72.8 per cent of respondents who expressed an opinion favoured the idea.

N. Ireland loyalists press U.K. for prisoner amnesty

BELFAST (R) — Protestant politicians pressed Britain Friday to grant an amnesty to hundreds of loyalist prisoners to mark an Irish amnesty which freed nine IRA convicts and gave 30 parole for Christmas.

"It's not prisoners' parole that's at the top of our agenda, it's the release of prisoners," Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) told reporters before starting talks with British

officials in Belfast.

He was speaking as nine Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners, including two convicted murderers, walked free from the Irish Republic's Port Laoise maximum security jail under a controversial amnesty by the Dublin government.

They were to have been freed in November but their release orders were scrapped after IRA gunmen killed a postal worker in a robbery in

the border town of Newry which shattered an IRA ceasefire that started in September.

Britain refuses to grant amnesty to hundreds of IRA and loyalist prisoners despite appeals to make a gesture of clemency to reward both groups for declaring ceasefires since September which have ushered in an unprecedented era of peace.

Two small Protestant political parties with links to

loyalist guerrillas who fought to keep Northern Ireland British said they would be raising the prisoner issue at their second round of talks with British officials since the ceasefires.

Britain has allowed 350 Republican and loyalist prisoners home for Christmas leave this year, about 100 fewer than in 1993, and has rejected appeals for a more sweeping amnesty.

Truce delayed; Bosnian Serbs say they already observe it

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Bosnian Serbs delayed an official ceasefire with Muslims for 24 hours until noon (1100 GMT) Saturday but said they had already ordered their forces to stop fighting Friday.

U.N. envoy Yasushi Akashi was still negotiating the text of an agreement with the Serbs at their Pale headquarters outside Sarajevo when the Friday noon deadline for the ceasefire passed.

But Mr. Akashi emerged shortly afterwards with a document signed by Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his army commander, General Ratko Mladic, and told reporters: "Our enormous efforts have resulted in a happy outcome."

He read a text declaring "a general ceasefire along all lines of confrontation which will take place at 1200 hours on Dec. 24."

Mr. Akashi left for Sarajevo to sign up the Muslim-led Bosnian government while Mr. Karadzic said: "As far as we are concerned, the ceasefire has already taken effect."

The United Nations and Serb and Muslim military commanders have until Jan. 1

to negotiate a four-month "cessation of hostilities" which will lead to the deployment of U.N. peacekeepers between the two sides.

The agreement crowns a private mediation effort by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter who was called in by Bosnian Serbs this week to break the deadlock in efforts to end almost 33 months of war in Bosnia.

The ceasefire agreement appeared to have been simplified with serious obstacles to an overall agreement removed.

There was no mention of Serb demands that Muslim forces withdraw from a demilitarised zone outside Sarajevo or of the status of a disputed big power peace plan.

Mr. Karadzic said after signing: "Our mutual intention is to conclude a final peace agreement. I think we are very close to that and I hope the international community will make every endeavour to make a final peace treaty and stabilise the Balkans."

The ceasefire agreement guaranteed the freedom of movement of U.N. convoys and safety for U.N. personnel

and the prompt, unconditional release of prisoners of war.

Mr. Akashi went to Pale Friday morning to discuss difficulties over the inclusion of the status of the big power peace plan in the agreement. He appeared in the end to have settled for less.

Serbs regard the plan as dividing Bosnia almost equally between themselves and a federation of Muslims and Croats — as a starting point for peace negotiations.

The Bosnian government insists it should be the basis of a peace settlement.

A threat to the truce is that the Carter and U.N. proposals do not include Croatian Serbs and rebel Muslims who are fighting government forces in the Bihac enclave in the northwest.

This is the only part of the country where serious fighting is still taking place and there is no guarantee the ceasefire would stop it, even though the Bosnian Serb forces would have to cease involvement.

The government 5th Corps defending Bihac said heavy snow had slowed fighting although Serb shelling had continued.

Corps spokesman Damir Mizdric said by telephone that Serbs were reinforcing their troops around Bihac.

"I doubt very much that the ceasefire will work. We assess it as just another Karadzic game," he added.

Mr. Karadzic is still likely to press for the withdrawal of Muslim forces from Mount Igman, west of Sarajevo, where they are guarding the only free road to the mainly Muslim Bosnian capital.

Mr. Akashi said Thursday that the Igman problem "should have been settled a long time ago but we are still stuck on that issue that darkens the prospects of solving the other issues."

The United Nations and the Bosnian rivals refused to be deterred by an attack on a Sarajevo market Thursday in which two men were killed and seven people wounded.

Peacekeepers said Friday that examinations of debris showed that tank shells rather than mortar bombs were probably responsible but that they could not determine which side had fired them.

However, U.N. spokesman Gary Coward said it was "unlikely" that government forces had fired the rounds.

S. Korea's Kim carries out major cabinet reshuffle

SEOUL (R) — South Korean president Kim Young-Sam Friday made sweeping cabinet changes, replacing Foreign Minister Han Sung-Joo and a dozen other members, a presidential spokesman said.

Mr. Han will be replaced by Gong Ro-Myung, a career diplomat who is now ambassador to Japan.

In the biggest cabinet shake-up since taking office in February last year, Mr. Kim dismissed Defence Minister Rhee Byoung-Tae, Trade Minister Kim Chul-Su and Interior Minister Choi Hyung-Woo.

Deputy Prime Minister Hong Jae-Hyung, who is also the economic planning minister, will head the powerful finance and economics board. This was created by the merger of the Finance Ministry and Economic Planning Board under a government reorganisation plan.

Kim Deok, the head of the Agency for National Security

Planning, was named unification minister, responsible for relations with Communist North Korea. The holder of the post automatically becomes one of two deputy prime ministers.

Former Defence Minister Kwon Young-Hae will head the Agency for National Security Planning, the powerful internal security agency, and Lee Yang-Ho, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was named defence minister.

Finance Minister Park Jae-Yoon was transferred to trade minister and the ambassador to the United States, Han Seung-Soo, was named presidential chief secretary in place of Park Kwang-Yong.

The presidential spokesman said Mr. Kim introduced into his cabinet new figures to implement his crusade to boost South Korea's international competitiveness and eradicate corrupt practices.

The shake-up had been expected since early this month

when Mr. Kim proposed a bill to merge and streamline major government ministries and cut dozens of high-ranking posts.

Parliament earlier Friday passed the reorganisation bill to pave the way for the sweeping cabinet changes.

The bill, under which four major economic ministries would be merged into two new ministries, was passed by 171 votes to 79, a parliamentary spokesman said.

The highlight of the reorganisation is the merger of the Finance Ministry and the Economic Planning Board, which was in charge of drawing up budget plans. The Construction and Transportation Ministries were also merged.

Mr. Kim's proposal to reorganise the government, which will cut posts of 32 senior officials, including two ministers and three vice-ministers, has touched off intense debate in parliament in the past two weeks.

Opposition members, demanding a deeper and wider reorganisation, had staged a filibuster to try to delay the bill, but rival parties Wednesday reached a compromise under which opposition demands would be considered at a separate parliamentary session early next year.

Last week in a prelude to the reshuffle, Mr. Kim appointed Lee Hong-Koo, an expert on Korean unification, as his new prime minister. Mr. Lee moved from the Unification Ministry.

Analysts said Friday's shake-up appeared also aimed at giving his cabinet a facelift following a series of corruption scandals and disasters, including the collapse in October of a bridge in central Seoul which killed 32 people.

In South Korea, a president often reshuffles his cabinet when seeking to boost flagging public confidence in the government.

Christmas nears, but no word on pilot in N. Korea

SEOUL (R) — U.S. military officials got no response from North Korea Friday to a request for a border meeting to arrange the return of a captured U.S. army helicopter pilot by Christmas, a U.S. spokesman said.

"We, of course, are seeking a meeting at Panmunjom but the North has not responded to our request," said Jim Coles, a spokesman for the U.S. military in South Korea.

"We will be ready for talks whenever the North accepts the offer."

Military officials in Seoul said U.S. military officers had made the request for talks through North Korean officers at the border hamlet of Panmunjom who said they would pass it on to the leadership in Pyongyang.

At Panmunjom, the only crossing point in the tense Korean border, North Korea Thursday handed over the body of U.S. army Chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon, killed when his helicopter was downed last Saturday after straying into North Korean territory.

The pilot of the helicopter, Bobby Hall, was captured by the North Koreans.

Pyeongyang has said the

helicopter was on a spy mission. It was still questioning Hall, who is from Bookersville, Florida.

On Friday, the chief of staff of the North Korean army, Marshal Choe Kwang, called for vigilance in the face of "reckless" acts by enemy forces.

"The enemy continuously strains the situation in our country by conducting reckless commotions and military exercises against us," Marshal Choe said at a ceremony to mark the third anniversary of Kim Jong-Il's elevation to supreme military commander, broadcast on official Pyongyang Radio.

"We must keenly watch the enemy's aggression and war manoeuvres, and must maintain high vigilance and be in full combat readiness so we can cope with any contingency."

Hang Chang-On, a senior North Korean diplomat to the United Nations in Geneva Thursday accused the United States of carrying out 200 "espionage activities" against his country in November alone, by planes and helicopters doing aerial reconnaissance.

Mr. Han said his country hoped to resolve the problem

of releasing the airman on a "humanitarian basis" but would have to have a "thorough investigation of the incident."

White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers said shortly after the return of Hilemon's body Thursday that President Bill Clinton regretted the downing of the OH-58 helicopter.

"It was unnecessary. I think, in our view. And we're hopeful that the North Koreans will return Chief Warrant Officer Hall shortly," she said.

"I think we're hopeful and we're certainly calling on the North Koreans to let him go in time for Christmas."

The body of Hilemon had arrived at Travis Air Force Base in California near San Francisco where the military planned an autopsy to determine the cause of death, U.S. military spokesman Coles said.

U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson, who brokered the return of Hilemon's body and brought it back to South Korea, left Seoul for Washington Friday to report on his five-day trip to President Clinton.

Mr. Richardson, who acted as Mr. Clinton's envoy after

arriving in Pyongyang on a previously scheduled trip, said in Seoul he had received assurances from Pyongyang that Hall would be released "very soon" but not necessarily by Christmas.

He said North Korea did not allow him to meet Hall or talk to him by telephone but he understood the pilot was being held at a military base near the crash site, a short distance north what is the world's last cold war frontier.

Washington blames pilot error but few details have emerged of the circumstances that led to the downing. The Pentagon said the crew thought they were still in South Korea minutes before they went down.

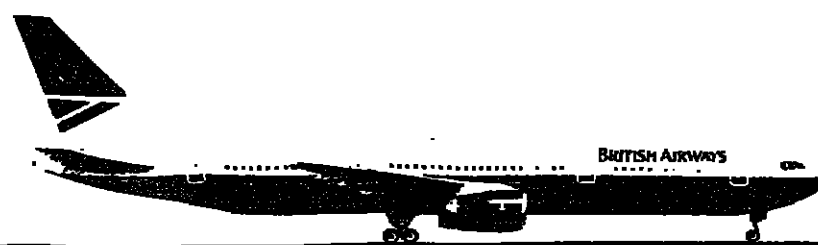
U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry earlier told reporters he was "encouraged" by Pyongyang's release of Hilemon's body.

Asked why the United States had not formally apologised to North Korea for the incident, Mr. Perry said: "What I've said about that I will say again, which is (that) it was a mistake on the part of the United States. I said there are many reasons I regret that mistake. It was pilot error, not a planned mission."

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Where environment suffers

THE DIRE consequences of the Gulf war on Iraq obviously exceed the direct losses in lives and material damage. Today, nearly four years later, the Iraqi people are still paying a heavy price in more ways than could be imagined before.

A seminar on the after-effects of the war took place recently in Baghdad and what the participants discovered was so horrific that it left many of them tormented, sad and above all angry at the callous posture of the community of nations towards the continuing tragedy in Iraq. The story that unfolded in that international meeting which included imminent scholars from the four corners of the world, portrayed a very grim picture about the irreversible dangers to Iraq's environment and eco-system touched off by the persistent blockade.

The experts did not just confine their deliberations to the conference room; they went out, visited places, talked to people and established for themselves the extent of the damage to Iraq's environment as a result of the war. The sewage system that was inspected was overflowing out in the open with all sorts of contaminated water because Iraqi municipal authorities are unable to mend or expand it as was originally conceived and planned. Once fertile land in Iraq has turned into waste land again because of extended negligence brought about by the sanctions. The waters of the main rivers in Iraq, the Euphrates and Tigris, are now contaminated and polluted. Even garbage can no longer be collected to meet the minimum health standards of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Clearly, neither drinking water nor irrigation water escaped from heavy pollution from open sewerage and other polluting sources. No wonder child mortality in Iraq has seen a dramatic rise in the aftermath of the war and cancer cases among adult Iraqis are shooting up in recent years.

The big question that remains is why the West continues to punish not only the regime but the people and Iraq as a country? What long-term interest can be served by spreading disease in Iraq or destroying its ecological system altogether? With all the talk we hear about human rights and humanitarianism, we wonder especially at this time of the year whether the nations behind the sanctions are truly faithful believers in what they preach to others.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE FINANCE minister who—presented the 1995 draft budget to Parliament has no power to introduce any new taxes in order to offset the JD 50 million deficit, and therefore the alternative at his disposal is to suggest reducing expenses and controlling imports, said Fahd Al Fakher, a writer in Al Ra'i Arabic daily. The writer noted that if the government secures Parliament's endorsement of the budget it would be like winning a vote of confidence over its policies in the coming year. Regardless of who is in charge of the Foreign Ministry or the government nothing can be done to change the system of working out the Jordanian fiscal budgets each year although some governments tend sometimes to give priority to certain aspects more than others from time to time, said the writer. It should be noted, he said, that 90 per cent of the budget is allocated for salaries, administrative expenses and payment of premiums on loans or interests on them and, therefore very little margin is left for the government to manoeuvre and find ways to deal with the deficit. The writer expressed belief that the 1995 draft budget was bound to be endorsed since it is almost impossible to find an alternative budget under the prevailing circumstances.

AL Dustour daily discussed a suggestion by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in which he proposed that the Arab League be transformed into a Middle East league so that Israel can join the Arab states in the new Middle East order. Peres seems to have forgotten that the Arabs had created the Arab League as a club where they can settle inter-Arab issues and chart programmes primarily for the interests of the Arab masses alone, said the paper. The Israeli Foreign Minister should realise that the Arab League groups states with the same culture, history and common destiny and above all people with common feelings and objectives, added the daily. If Israel is to join the group, said the paper, it ought first to comply with the requirements of peace with the Arabs and implement resolutions passed by the United Nations concerning its end of occupation of Arab lands and the restoration of the Palestinian people's rights. The paper said that the Arab League charter does not allow for Israel or any other country to be admitted to the Arab League and therefore Peres's dream can never be fulfilled.

JORDANIAN PERSPECTIVE

By Dr. Musa Keilani

Let history not repeat itself

MUCH AS SOME people in the Arab World would like to think otherwise, the recent resolution adopted by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) on Jerusalem including an acknowledgment of a Saudi prince's contribution to maintaining the Muslim holy shrines in the city while ignoring His Majesty King Hussein's historic role there was not at Jordan's expense in the long term. Indeed, the resolution came as a disappointment to us Jordanians and exposed the ill-feelings some Arab and Muslim countries continue to harbour towards Jordan despite all our efforts to set the record right. Notwithstanding the disappointment, what is of immediate concern to us here in Jordan is the short-sightedness that the Islamic leaders displayed while adopting the resolution.

Let us make one thing clear. Jordan has no problems with the resolution per se since it only underlined the firm stand of the Islamic World against Israeli usurpation of Jerusalem and efforts to Judaize the city, which is holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews. It was a resounding reaffirmation of Muslims' concern over the slow but steady moves adopted by Israel since 1967 to consolidate its grip on Jerusalem and obliterate all non-Jewish characters and identities of the city through creating new realities on the ground. But what bothers us in the OIC move is the unprecedented inclusion of a reference to the recent decision made by Saudi Arabia to maintain the holy sites there while ignoring the difficult responsibilities shouldered by Jordan for decades in the same context.

It is no secret that some of the comments made by some of the participants in the OIC summit in Casablanca were at best offensive to Jordan, including the sarcastic suggestion that it might be a good idea if all the Muslim countries send separate and individual letters of thanks to the Kingdom. The sarcasm and similar comments made by some others were indeed not pleasant, to say the least. They also showed that there are some in the Arab World who are upset by Jordan's strong and emphatic return to mainstream international and regional politics after a short span. It was clear, however, that these parties did not have a common position against Jordan, but were acting as a lobby for individual reasons, including perhaps envy over what the Kingdom accomplished through its carefully charted policies and actions over the years.

The admiration that Jordan enjoys in the international scene for its democratisation, respect for human rights, and

principled stands towards all international and regional issues is no secret. The strong relations that Jordan has established with world centres of real power are indeed the best protection and shield for the Kingdom against any party that might want to harm its interests. In any event, we believe that it is only a matter of time before those parties realise their folly and come to terms with the political course adopted by Jordan.

Beyond that, and more significant and dangerous, was the reality exposed in Casablanca that Islamic countries have not learnt from the past and remain engrossed in short-term objectives.

Let us go three or four decades back and trace the evolution of the so-called Islamic violence and extremism over which the OIC leaders expressed loud concern. Jordan was the first country in the Arab World to not only realise such a danger but also to adopt concrete moves to ensure that Islamic frustrations stemming mostly from world injustices to Muslims do not pose a danger to its national entity. The very presence of political groups which espouse "political Islam" in Jordan since the early 50s and their interaction with the mainstream political parameters and guidelines is the best evidence of the soundness of the Jordanian policy.

Memories are still fresh of the heavy criticism that the Jordanian policy drew from many quarters in the Arab World. Virtually there was no Arab leader who understood and appreciated the wisdom behind the policy of "co-optation and accommodation" that Jordan followed vis-à-vis Islamic political groups as evidenced in the political system that guides the Kingdom today. It could easily be said that the political ideologies of some of the Islamic groups in Jordan are much more strong and sound than many of their counterparts in the Arab World.

But the outstanding feature of Jordan is the fact that the Kingdom has been spared the rash of violence that many predicted and it was no accident. What we have today is political interaction with Islamic political groups which play a major role in the mainstream politics of our country in a spirit of democracy.

On the other side of the spectrum is what we have seen happening elsewhere in the Arab World; the grand mosque of Mecca in 1979, Syria in 1974 and again in 1981, and Egypt and Algeria today, not to mention the underlying tones of the so-called religious extremism evident in many

other Arab countries.

Had those countries given a thought to what Jordan was advocating and implementing since the 50s and 60s and accepted the wisdom and foresight behind the Kingdom's policies, we would not have had the debates that they witness today.

In essence, it is the same thought that comes to mind in the context of Jerusalem. Jordan has clearly stated its position that it would not relinquish its custodianship of the Islamic holy shrines in Jerusalem under the present conditions and until such time the Palestinians regain their legitimate political and territorial rights and are in a position to assume the responsibilities towards the holy sites.

Regardless of what anyone has to say about the issue, Jordan is firm on its stand that turning away from its role in Jerusalem at this point in time would only mean one thing—clearing the ground for Israel to assume control of the Islamic shrines in Jerusalem and a fast Judaisation of the city after a fast obliteration of its Muslim identity that Jordanians and every other Muslim cherish and seek to safeguard. That was the reason behind Jordan continuing to care for the Muslim sites in the occupied lands, including Jerusalem. That is not to mention the strong emotional links that the Hashemite family has with Jerusalem and the sacrifices that they have made in their endeavours to ensure that the Islamic sanctity of the city is not violated.

Let no one forget that the Hashemites have undertaken the three consecutive restoration projects in Jerusalem, including the personal donations made by His Majesty the King despite deep financial problems.

Those who worked behind the scenes to ensure that an acknowledgment of the Jordanian role in Jerusalem was excluded from the Casablanca resolution on Jerusalem while the financial role oil-rich Saudi Arabia played was given a special mention were indeed shortsighted. They might think they won a major victory against Jordan, but they did not realise and appreciate the wisdom of the Jordanian stand just as they did not care to consider the policies and advice of Jordan since the middle of this century.

We can only hope that they would come their senses and realise that history stands to repeat itself unless they rise beyond petty short-term politics and policies and look more closely at the Jordanian track record sooner than later. If not, then the Muslim World would be the loser in the end.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Writers urge government to include old retirees in new pension scheme

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, the situation in the Chechen Republic, the situation in the occupied Arab lands and pan-Arab affairs dominated the editorials and themes of articles of columnists in the local press in the past week.

Commenting on the government's decision to raise the pension of retiring civil servants and servicemen, a columnist in Al Dustour urged Parliament to lobby the government into including the old retirees.

Ahmad Shaker commended the government for raising the amount of pensions given to the retired personnel but said that servicemen and civil servants who had retired before under the previous regulations receive meagre pension barely sufficient for sustenance. He said that the government ought to come to the help of this sector of retired people and allow them to benefit from the regulations and help them lead a decent life in their retirement.

Ahmad Dabbas, a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab, dwelt on the same theme calling on the government to be fair to those who retired before December 1994. The writer said that some of the serving employees would be encouraged to seek retirement since they would get good pension after serving more than 20 years with the government. He said the government itself could resort to retiring a great number

of those who had completed the 20 years service in order to employ younger people who had spent years unemployed and seeking jobs to support their families.

A writer in Al Ra'i discussed the future of the Jordanian Company for Television production and said that though its past works were a cause of pride for Jordan the quality of production has deteriorated lately because the company started producing programmes and series not related to the traditional Jordanian heritage and life. The company's past production won wide fame in the Arab World because the managers sought to reflect the Jordanian image to the outside world in their production but the quality declined when topics alien to the Jordanian tradition began to appear in the company's production. Ibrahim Al Absi said that it was hoped that the new management under Faded Faneh would breathe new life into the company and restore to it the good reputation it had always enjoyed over the years.

Former Minister of Health Zeid Hamzeh wrote an article in Al Ra'i daily criticising the inflated public administration system which is bulging every year with the government employees having little to do and only impeding all attempts towards reforming the system. The writer gave the view that by stopping further appointment

in government departments, the government would encourage the private sector to flourish and absorb more job seekers. He said that the public administration was like a cancer eating away the gains that the Kingdom was achieving and impeding the Kingdom's progress in all domains.

A writer in Al Dustour demanded the government apply a comprehensive health insurance system to cover all members of the public and ensure good health for every one. It is only people who enjoy good health who can be productive and rid themselves of poverty and unemployment and it is those who enjoy good health who can best serve their nation, said Ali Safadi, a former advisor to the prime minister. The writer urged the concerned authorities to take extra care about ensuring the good quality of foodstuffs, non pollution of drinking water and preventing the pollution of air by smoke or industrial and other waste. The writer said that the whole country suffers and pays the cost for the treatment of the sick but sickness can be avoided through precautionary measures that are essential for the benefit of the whole nation.

Reflecting on the situation in the Chechen Republic, Al Ra'i daily said that Jordan is very concerned over the tragic situation befalling the Chechen people

and the continued military confrontation to settle a dispute that could have been resolved through dialogue and peaceful means. It is true that Jordan does not wish to meddle in other countries' affairs but it is also true that the people of Jordan as a whole are deeply concerned over the loss of innocent life resulting from an attempt by the Chechen people to seek independence. The paper noted that the war was bound to leave very deep scars and hatreds for decades to come no matter what the outcome of the current conflict could be.

Mohammad Kawash, a writer in Al Dustour, reminded the Russian people that they had rejected the Communist rule and rebelled against it and said why should Moscow now try to impose on the Chechens something which they resent. The writer said that Russia as a major world power has a great deal of interests with the Arab and Islamic world and should, therefore, respect the feelings of the Muslims and stop its fight against their Chechen brothers. Moscow should respect the Chechens' desire to achieve independence from the Russian Federation.

Observers who follow up the behaviour of the Israeli government realise that Israeli leaders are not concerned with the implementation of the Oslo agreement with the Palestinians nor are they keen on pulling troops from the

occupied territories. It is the military which controls the destiny of the Israeli society by influencing the government actions all the time, said Walid Abu Bakr. The writer said that nothing in what Israel has done since its signing of the Oslo agreement proves that the Israelis are really intent on granting the Palestinians their rights or reaching a just and permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Taher Adwan, a columnist for Al Dustour, accused the Israelis of preventing the Palestinians from organising free elections in implementation of the Oslo and Cairo agreements. The writer said that while the Palestinians consider their agreement with Israel as a way towards resolving the conflict and ending the occupation, Israel considers the agreements as a means for perpetuating their presence in Arab land. The delay in the implementation of the agreements and the obstacle in the path of the elections are clear manifestations of the Israeli government's intentions, said the writer.

Hamadeh Faraneh criticised the Israeli government for dragging its feet on the question of repatriating the thousands of Palestinian citizens who were turned away because their permits had expired. He asked how could Israel hope for normalisation of relations with the Arabs

while holding tight to its obsolete policy of depriving the Palestinians of the right of return. The writer said that Israel has been seeking an end of the state of war with the Arabs but without giving anything in return. It has not yet returned the occupied lands and now it refuses to accept the return of the displaced people, added the writer.

Al Dustour daily considered a statement issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in Bahrain as bearing positive signals especially towards Iraq. The paper said that the GCC's statement over Jerusalem, rejecting any change in its status and character, was also a good step towards enhancing the Arab stand. In fact the GCC statement was supportive of Jordan's declared position which demanded the return of Arab Jerusalem and the establishment of a comprehensive peace.

Commenting on the recent demonstrations in Bahrain, a writer in Al Ra'i said that the government there ought to respect the view of the public even though they are Shiites. It is shameful for the Arab states not to support the Arab masses when they are demanding democratic rule. The writer compared the repressive measures exercised by certain Arab regimes against their masses to the American hegemony and oppression it is exercising on the Arab regimes in the Gulf.

Carter does it again — but what is it exactly?

By Arthur Spiegelman
Reuter

NEW YORK — There he goes again, telling some world-class pariah what a nice guy he is and presto — like magic — peace appears to move a step or two closer.

Dressed in a turtleneck, smiling broadly and armed only with moral force, former President Jimmy Carter marched into the quagmire of former Yugoslavia, the place where World War I started, and appeared to forge a ceasefire in Bosnia starting on Friday, weather and warring parties permitting.

He mispronounces the names of the adversaries in the dispute, fails to impress anyone with his command of the issues and yet winds up with a possible diplomatic triumph.

If the ceasefire actually takes place with peace talks

following, it will be the third major foreign policy success this year for America's hardest working ex-president, a man who specialises in going where angels wisely fear to tread.

Since losing the presidency to Ronald Reagan in 1980, Mr. Carter has built up a reputation as a lone ranger of American foreign policy, a fellow willing to deal with any dictator, but especially those the rest of the world avoid like the plague, like North Korea's late "great leader" Kim Il-Sung and Haiti's former strongman Raoul Cedras.

Time magazine calls him the "master practitioner of nice-guy diplomacy" and "a superb ex-president."

The 70-year-old Carter's technique is to show up and

embrace the enemy, tell him how misunderstood he is in the wider world, how you know his heart is in the right place, how he is not the demon everyone says he is and how problems can be solved without force, especially the use of American force.

The technique works. The question is how. Is it the powers of moral suasion that Mr. Carter brings to bear? The iron will behind the big grin? Or is it that by the time the call goes out for Jimmy Carter, the other party is willing to play "let's make a deal"?

In Haiti, Mr. Carter managed to avert an imminent U.S. invasion by convincing Mr. Cedras to step down and give control back to the democratically elected but

undemocratically ousted president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

To do that, Mr. Carter heaped praise on Mr. Cedras, a man few had a good word for outside of military headquarters. He offered to have Mr. Cedras teach a Sunday school class at Mr. Carter's Baptist Church, praised Mrs. Cedras for her beauty and intelligence and admired their children.

He was finishing up the deal as Bill Clinton was sending American warplanes off to bomb targets in Haiti. The U.S. president called the planes back and the Carter mission succeeded. A lot of Americans and Haitians probably owe their lives to Mr. Carter.

North Korea was a more

complicated story.

Mr. Carter accepted an invitation to meet Kim Il-Sung and discuss North Korea's nuclear programme as the United States was readying U.N. sanctions that the communist country claimed would be an act of war.

Told by the Clinton administration he was not there to negotiate, he walked off with an agreement under which North Korea would freeze its nuclear programme if the two sides entered good-faith negotiations. He also announced the deal on CNN before informing the White House. The result was embarrassment for Mr. Clinton but no new Korean war.

In the Serbian stronghold of Bosnia this week, Mr. Carter met Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, told him

Americans were only hearing one side of the story and that U.N. sanctions on Serbia could be lifted if the Bosnian Serbs showed good faith on a ceasefire, allowed Sarajevo airport to function and U.N. convoys to move through the countryside.

The statements raised the usual hackles in government circles but Mr. Carter was able to fly off to Croatia saying that both Bosnians Serbs and Muslims accepted a ceasefire.

Robert Pastor, a senior aide at Carter's Centre for Conflict Resolution says Mr. Carter can move into places that governments can't.

And he can get things done, even while the world doubts or scoffs at his technique.

كثيرا ما يصدق

World ends year of chaos though with some hope

By Nicholas Doughty
Reuter

LONDON — From Chechnya to Rwanda and Bosnia, conflict, misery and chaos stalked the world in 1994, making a mockery of hopes that a new order could emerge five years after the end of the cold war.

There were also signs of hope with progress towards reconciliation in some areas where it seemed peace would never come — the Middle East, South Africa and northern Ireland.

But, as the millennium approaches, it was a year that generally lived up to the 20th century's reputation as the most destructive and bloody in history.

There was much talk of peacekeeping but often little peace to keep. The United Nations now has more than 80,000 personnel deployed in more than a dozen missions around the globe.

The world community repeated its condemnation of atrocities and aggression and its commitment to international law and human rights like a mantra at every diplomatic gathering.

But behind the words institutions like the United Nations, NATO and the European Union seemed increasingly impotent and over-stretched by the pace of change. Major powers were divided, their governments weak and tired, lacking in political will.

Russia, still struggling to overcome the Soviet legacy and build a sound economy, took a tougher line with its western partners over Bosnia, Iraq and NATO expansion.

The United States floundered in foreign policy, raising troubling questions about traditional U.S. leadership of the Western world. President Bill Clinton was deeply unpopular at home and threatened by a wave of support for the Republicans.

Both countries worried about unrest close to their borders. The United States sent troops to Haiti in September, narrowly averting an open conflict with the country's military rulers before they stepped down.

Russia sent troops and

tanks into the breakaway region of Chechnya in December and tried to keep the lid on conflicts in other parts of the troubled Caucasus region on its southern rim.

From Japan to Italy other governments found themselves in serious trouble as they struggled to pull their countries out of recession or deal with charges of corruption.

New threats and worries were added to existing problems — the smuggling of nuclear materials, the risk that North Korea and others might have atomic weapons and the continued rise of Islamic fundamentalism in countries such as Algeria.

With Islam the fastest growing religion in the world and Asia establishing itself as perhaps the real hub of economic power, the Western world became more aware that its values and views were no longer accepted as dominant.

Perhaps more than anything else, 1994 will be remembered as the year in which the world stood by and watched as up to one million people were slaughtered in a tiny African republic.

The massacres and renewed war in Rwanda, which set minority Tutsi rebels against the Hutu majority, was touched off by the assassination of the country's president in April.

Three months later the rebels had won. Refugee camps in the region are filled mainly with Hutus, fearful of retribution after the massacres. Most of those who died were Tutsis.

Although France sent troops to set up "safe areas" for refugees and the United Nations later sent in some peacekeepers, no one intervened to stop the massacre.

In Bosnia, too, the killing went on as the war entered its third winter. Europe's worst conflict since World War II defied every diplomatic effort to end it, despite the emergence of a new coalition including the United States and Russia in the five-nation "contact group."

The United Nations managed to end the Serb siege bombardment of Sarajevo with the threat of NATO air strikes in February. The 16-

nation alliance shot down Serb planes and launched air strikes, the first military action in its history.

But what looked like a new show of resolve had collapsed in humiliation by the end of the year, when the United Nations decided it was too risky for peacekeepers to call in more NATO strikes in defence of so-called "safe areas" like Bihac.

The Bosnian Serbs refused to accept an international peace plan, despite pressure from Serbia, and there was talk of pulling out U.N. forces.

Peacekeepers also left Somalia where a U.S.-led mission to stop the fighting and rebuild the Horn of Africa state had gone disastrously wrong. The last U.N. troops will be gone from Somalia by the end of March 1995.

South Africa provided one of the few bright spots on a continent ravaged by poverty, disease, instability and wars that continued in countries such as Angola.

Nelson Mandela, imprisoned under the apartheid regime, became president after the first all-race elections in April. His victory drew a line under the era of white domination and ended South Africa's international isolation.

There was hope, too, for reconciliation in the Middle East although the path to a lasting peace proved difficult.

Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in October, complementing the agreement between the Jewish state and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on self-rule. PLO leader Yasser Arafat returned home in triumph to Gaza.

For their efforts, Mr. Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his Foreign Minister Shimon Peres were awarded the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize.

However, talks between Israel and Syria remained deadlocked and not everyone backed the peace process.

In February a Jewish settler killed about 30 Palestinians praying at a mosque in Hebron. A suicide bomber from the militant Muslim group Hamas blew up a packed bus in Tel Aviv in October, killing 22 people.

spokesman said that Germany was following "with anxiety the development of the situation" in Chechnya and hoped that the Russian action could put a question mark over joint Russian and German military manoeuvres planned for next year.

In Prague, Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec said the Russian army offensive "goes beyond the limits of what can acceptably be called internal affairs" and "will certainly have international repercussions."

"All he can hope is that he can end the crisis as fast as possible, with as little bloodshed as possible, and concentrate on damage control."

In Bonn, a foreign ministry



... And the killing continues (AFP photo)

Such attacks, including the bombing of a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires which killed almost 100, showed that 1970s-style political violence had not disappeared despite the capture of guerrilla mastermind "Carlos the Jackal" in August.

Problems also plagued other parts of the Middle East.

Iraq, desperate for relief from U.N. sanctions that followed the 1991 Gulf war, sent troops to the Kuwait border in October, forcing the United States to deploy thousands of soldiers to the Gulf before Baghdad backed off. Yemen was torn by civil war.

In Europe, NATO and the European Union (EU) started discussions about taking in former communist states, who are eager to join the rich western clubs and find stability.

But, as Russian and western troops left Berlin five years after the fall of communism, it was clear that

Europe remained a continent divided, riven by old suspicions and jealousies.

Sweden, Austria and Finland voted to join the 12-nation EU. Norway decided to remain outside the bloc, which otherwise made little fresh progress towards greater European integration following problems with the Maastricht treaty.

Many governments seemed weak and unpopular. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl saw his majority cut in elections and French President Francois Mitterrand fell seriously ill.

In Italy, a political revolution swept the old order from power in March. But Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi then found himself dogged by allegations of mismanagement and corruption.

The far-right, part of Italy's new coalition, made gains in other countries such as Austria and Belgium as voters showed their discontent with the established order.

There was a real breakthrough in one of the world's longest-running conflicts, be-

tween the British government and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in northern Ireland.

The IRA, fighting to end British rule in a conflict that has lasted 25 years, announced a ceasefire in September. Loyalist guerrillas followed suit and peace talks could finally start.

For Asia, the year was marked by political uncertainty.

North Korea, suspected by the United States and others of developing nuclear weapons, sparked an international crisis by refusing to allow inspection of its nuclear facilities.

The crisis underlined growing fears about a new nuclear threat. Police in Germany and elsewhere seized highly radioactive materials smuggled out of the former Soviet Union.

North Korea finally agreed

to freeze its nuclear programme in a deal with the West but fresh questions were raised by the death of its Stalinist leader, Kim Il-Sung, in July.

His son, Kim Jong-Il, prepared to take up the reins of leadership. But there were few clues to indicate what this would mean for one of the world's most isolated and secretive states.

There were questions, too, about China, potentially the dominant power in Asia and set to take over Hong Kong in 1997.

With Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping looking increasingly feeble and frail, who will take over at a time when the country is developing economically at breakneck speed?

Japan, locked in disputes with the United States over trade, was wracked by unremitting political upheaval that brought in a Socialist

prime minister for the first time in nearly 50 years.

For those who believe that wealth and economic well-being could help eradicate many of the world's troubles, 1994 offered some consolation.

More than 100 countries signed the world's biggest free trade pact, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into force and 18 countries from the Asia-Pacific region pledged to work for free trade in their booming region within 25 years.

But it also became clear that another, darker kind of global economic power was at work.

Over 130 countries agreed at a meeting in Naples in November to fight organised crime, with concern growing at the power and influence of those who peddle drugs and launder money.

Russian deputies urge Grozny ceasefire

(Continued from page 1)

Moscow to avoid bloodshed and negotiate an end to the fighting.

The European Union and the United States have publicly backed President Yeltsin's argument that Chechnya remains a part of Russia and the conflict there between his troops and the region's separatist militias is an internal matter.

But concern has grown in Western capitals over the future of Mr. Yeltsin, still backed by major powers to lead Russia to a stable future. The

Chechnya crisis has once more raised questions about his health, judgement and political security.

"Yeltsin can risk Russian soldiers' lives storming Grozny or he can besiege it all winter. But whichever way you look at it, Yeltsin does not win any political points," a senior Western diplomat in Moscow said.

"All he can hope is that he can end the crisis as fast as possible, with as little bloodshed as possible, and concentrate on damage control."

In Bonn, a foreign ministry

spokesman said that Germany was following "with anxiety the development of the situation" in Chechnya and hoped that the Russian action could put a question mark over joint Russian and German military manoeuvres planned for next year.

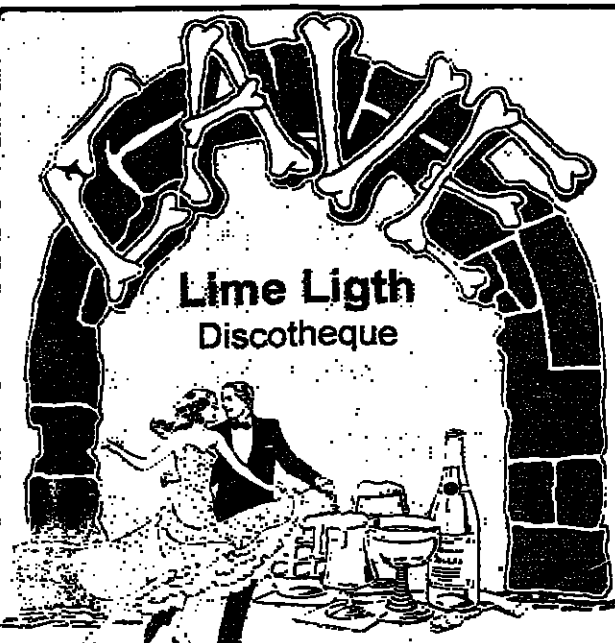
In Prague, Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec said the Russian army offensive "goes beyond the limits of what can acceptably be called internal affairs" and "will certainly have international repercussions."

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Pundits see gold ailing before it gets better

LONDON (R) — The price of gold may drop as low as \$350 an ounce in 1995 or 12.5 per cent down on this year's lacklustre best as higher U.S. interest rates lead investors to quit billion for better returns in equities and bonds.

Reuters this week polled top bullion analysts in London and Zurich for 1995 forecasts for gold prices. Few were buoyant. Some saw a return of jewellery and industry demand lifting gold back above the \$400 barrier — but not until late in the year.

Gold is now trading near \$380 from almost \$400 in September.

"The temptation now to buy near the bottom of 1994's range is great. But this may be the top of next year's range," said Andrew Smith, analyst at Union Bank of Switzerland.

Analysts' forecasts for gold range between a low of \$350 from Mr. Smith and a high of

\$430 from Jon Bergthell at James Capel.

"I am not looking for a bull market next year," said Ted Arnold of Merrill Lynch Futures Research.

Hanspeter Hausheer at Swiss Bank Corporation in Zurich saw gold climbing just above \$400 eventually next year.

"We are forecasting good demand for gold. Fundamentals will be increasingly responsible for dictating the price," he said.

But even gold bulls saw it staying below \$400 until the latter part of the year, largely as a result of the decreased involvement of fund investors.

"The investment funds that had taken the metal on board during 1993 have now off-loaded it in search for better returns elsewhere," said Rhona O'Connell at T. Hoare and Co.

"Over 1994 as a whole, the

supply-demand equation looks to have been broadly in balance and the price has responded accordingly," Mr. O'Connell said.

But she saw physical demand for the metal supporting the price above the recent low of \$375 and the diminished presence of speculative players as potentially beneficial for the market.

In other precious metals, forecasts for silver have a wide spread through the year, from a dip to 430 cents from Mr. Smith to a peak at 575 cents at the end of the second quarter by Mr. Hausheer.

Silver is now trading around 480 cents an ounce, well off the 585 cent peak reached in late March.

Mr. Hausheer said the recent fall had stimulated good physical demand from India and that this boded well for next year. But Mr. Smith said Indian selling could reemerge

as moves to rupee convertibility gathered pace and confidence in Indian paper grew.

Mr. O'Connell described silver as a "speculator's dream" in view of its relative cheapness and history of price volatility.

Platinum has a forecast range between \$380 and \$490

during 1995, with bears believing the risk to Russian production is overplayed and bulls pointing to the metal's already tight supply and demand balance.

Palladium forecasts are generally more tightly grouped. Predictions centre

on \$155 an ounce for the end of 1994 with firmness continuing throughout 1995.

Most analysts said continued strong demand from the electrical sector and increased loadings in catalytic converters would underpin values throughout the year.

OECD sees Italian growth but missed budget targets

MILAN (R) — The Italian economy should continue to grow strongly over the next two years, increasingly aided by internal demand, the OECD said.

A heavy budget deficit, however, would hang over the economy, with the Paris-based think tank predicting the government will miss targets set in its 1995 financial package.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) forecast predicted gross domestic product (GDP) growth for Italy at 2.2 per cent in 1994, rising to 2.7 per cent next year and 2.9 per cent in 1996.

Despite the improving economy, the jobs rate was likely to hover around the 11 per cent mark, helping contain inflation.

"Unemployment, though easing from record highs, could remain high, with wage growth subdued and further disinflation gains," the OECD wrote in its year-end report.

The 1995 budget, which is currently passing through parliament, aims to cut 48 trillion lire (\$29.39 billion) from the deficit through spending cuts and revenue increases.

"A deficit overshoot of 13 trillion lire (\$7.96 billion) is projected for 1995, reflecting higher interest rates, possible delays in implementing planned spending cuts and a cautious assessment of the amount of receipts likely to accrue from one-off measures," the OECD said.

The report made no mention of the recent setback to the government's plans for cuts in pension spending. Some revenue-cutting measures were stripped out of the budget-cutting package at the end of November at the insistence of unions.

Stephen Potter, the OECD's head of country studies, told reporters in Paris that this setback — along with expenditure for recent floods in northern Italy — would mean a worsening of the government's fiscal situation.

"Altogether the deficit overshoot we already mentioned in the economic outlook for next year will tend to be rather larger in the absence of further action," he said.

However, he said the OECD was confident that new measures due to be drawn up by the end of next June, would be taken.

The OECD said Italy's budget overshoot would still represent a narrowing of the deficit-to-GDP ratio to 9.1 per cent in 1995, from a projected 9.7 per cent this year, with the ratio forecast to fall further in 1996 to 7.8 per cent.

"But the underlying progress toward budget consolidation may be insufficient to allow any substantial convergence of Italian interest rates with German rates," the OECD said.

Italy's benchmark 10-year bond presently stands at a near five per cent premium to its German counterpart — reflecting how investors saw Italian securities as higher risk investments.

Dollar rally depends on interest rates in U.S.

The following report covering the week from Thursday, Dec. 15 until Wednesday, Dec. 21, 1994, is provided by Nasar Nabulsi, private client group at Merrill Lynch-Dubai

Currency outlook

Overview

Fundamental View: After firming steadily since the Nov. 8 Republican victory in mid-term U.S. elections, the dollar has paused at the DM/USD 1.57 and JPY/USD 100 levels as foreign exchange markets look for new themes. With the Fed having declined to raise rates again at its Dec. 20 FOMC meeting, the next move is likely to be a 50 basis point hike in the Fed funds rate at their Jan. 31-Feb. 1 meeting. A similar rates hike is expected at the March 31 meeting.

If that turns out to be the peaking of U.S. rates as our December forecast assumes, the dollar rally may not have much further to go. If U.S. growth remains strong enough to encourage the Fed to raise the funds rate to 7 per cent or higher, a stronger dollar may result.

For now, we maintain our 12-month forecasts of DM/USD .55 and JPY/USD 92, which assumes that Germany and Japan will hike official interest rates in the second half of 1995.

Technical View: The U.S. dollar was flat last week, gaining ground against three of the six major currencies we regularly discuss and losing ground against three. As a result, the U.S. dollar index fell .01 of a point and, in the process, broke a string of seven consecutive weekly advances. The index has not put together a rally string of that length since the first quarter of 1991.

Although the index challenged important resistance at 89.00-91.00, it was not penetrated. While medium term momentum is still constructive and indicates still higher rally highs in coming weeks, short term oscillators have peaked. Therefore, further weakness, in the context of the still developing uptrend, appear indicated.

A recently deteriorating sentiment background also contributes to the need for a correction. A break below 89.00 would be a good sign that a correction is under way; although benchmark support remains at 84.91, most of the nearby support exists in the 86.80-87.95 range.

Japanese yen

Fundamental View: The dollar has firmed to the JPY/USD 100 level in recent weeks in response to a number of positive factors. These include (1) a move towards restrictive monetary policy in the U.S., (2) the sweeping Republican victory in U.S. mid-term elections, (3) evidence that Japan's current account surplus is declining rapidly, and (4) the appointment of a new central bank governor in Japan who may not be as hawkish as his predecessor.

That said, the net demand for foreign assets by Japanese investors is expected to remain weak over the next year relative to a current account surplus which should still exceed

\$100 billion. Although the dollar could strengthen further in the coming weeks for the reasons listed above, the surprise to investors is likely to be how it goes over the next 12 months due to weak Japanese demand for foreign assets. We continue to expect the dollar to trade as low as JPY/USD 92 over the next twelve months.

Technical View: The Japanese yen fell 0.1 per cent versus the U.S. dollar during the week ended Dec. 16. Momentum is still weak, and appears to have the potential to have a downward bias into February. If so, this would allow for an upcoming penetration of 100.80-101.80 Y/USD support; such a move would set the stage for further weakness to 105-107. With the above in mind, resistance at 96-97 takes on added significance.

Deutsche mark

Fundamental View: The Deutschmark has been range bound since late-November, trading between DM/USD 1.56 and 1.57. There was little reaction in the currency markets to news that the Fed chose not to raise rates following its FOMC meeting on Dec. 20 as it was not widely expected that they would raise rates. Most market participants are looking for the next rate increase in late January or early February. Until then, economic data should confirm that the U.S. economy is quite strong which is likely to reinforce the need for another rate increase and thus be supportive of the dollar.

By the second quarter of 1995, we expect to see official rates 100 basis points higher, with the Fed funds at 6.5 per cent and the discount rate at 5.5 per cent. Rate increases beyond this will depend on the vitality of the U.S. economy. If it allows, as we expect, then 100 basis points is probably enough. If the economy doesn't slow, we could see more increases.

We do not think that the Bundesbank will lift their key discount and Lombard rates before the second half of 1995, though it is likely that the repo rate will edge higher starting sometime in the first quarter. We maintain our forecast that the dollar-mark exchange rate will trade in a range of DM/USD 1.55-1.60 during 1995.

Technical View: The Deutschmark gained 0.3 per cent against the U.S. dollar last week and has begun to move below the post-February uptrend channel. Sentiment continues to improve, and is now challenging oversold parameters. Momentum still seems to have the potential to remain under pressure until late January or early February. These points suggest that a potentially important medium term top is in place.

Although the 1.58 DM/USD level still has to be monitored as important support, further weakness through 1.595 would lay the groundwork for a move toward 1.64-1.68. Benchmark resistance remains at 1.486, but there is now intervening resistance at 1.544-1.547.

Against the yen, the D-mark gained 0.4 per cent last week. However, medium term oscillators remain under pressure, and still suggest the potential test of the lows of the long term

trading range. That range generates support at 59-60, with resistance above 66.50.

Pound sterling

Fundamental View: It has been a rather quiet period for the pound which traded at USD/GBP 1.56 and DM/GBP 2.56 for most of the last week. Currency markets showed little reaction to news that the Federal Reserve chose not to raise rates following its open market committee meeting on Dec. 20. Most market observers view monetary policy in the U.K., Germany and the U.S. as being on hold for now, so a move was not widely expected. Indeed, the spread between the U.K. and German yield curves has been fairly steady in recent weeks.

Next year, we expect the Bank of England to raise rates by another 100 basis points, pushing the base lending rate up to 7.25 per cent. German official rates — the Lombard and discount rates — are expected to remain unchanged during the first half of 1995 before possibly edging higher in the second half.

As we expect the short-term interest rate differential between Germany and the U.K. to widen, we look for the pound to appreciate against the mark to DM/GBP 2.50 in 12-month's time and we expect the pound to follow the mark higher against the dollar to our 12-month forecast of USD/GBP 1.61.

Technical View: The British pound lost less than 0.1 per cent versus the U.S. dollar during the week ended Dec. 16. Sentiment continues to improve and is near oversold levels. Momentum is weak and has the potential to remain so until February. Important support exists at 1.561-1.526 U.S.\$/L, and a break below that range would allow for a test of the January low at \$1.465. Resistance exists near \$1.58, then \$1.645.

Against the DM, sterling fell 0.3 per cent last week. Momentum is near overbought and beginning to deteriorate. The inability to rally through 2.48 in coming weeks could suggest an imminent medium term peak. Nearby support exists at 2.435.

ZERO DAY LEFT for Christmas

The most sentimental present

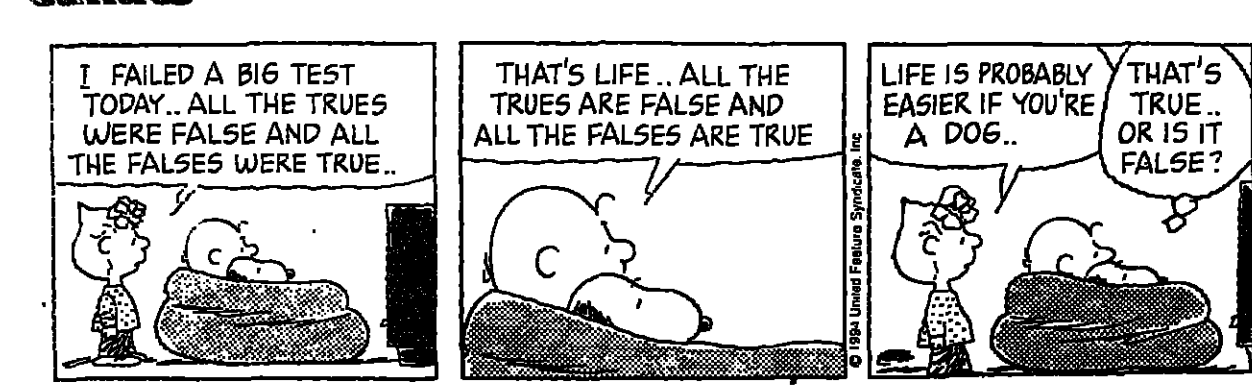
DAJANI'S

Gold-Gems - House Presents etc.
from JD 20, — (36% sale)
Amra Hotel Shops, 6th Circle, Amman.

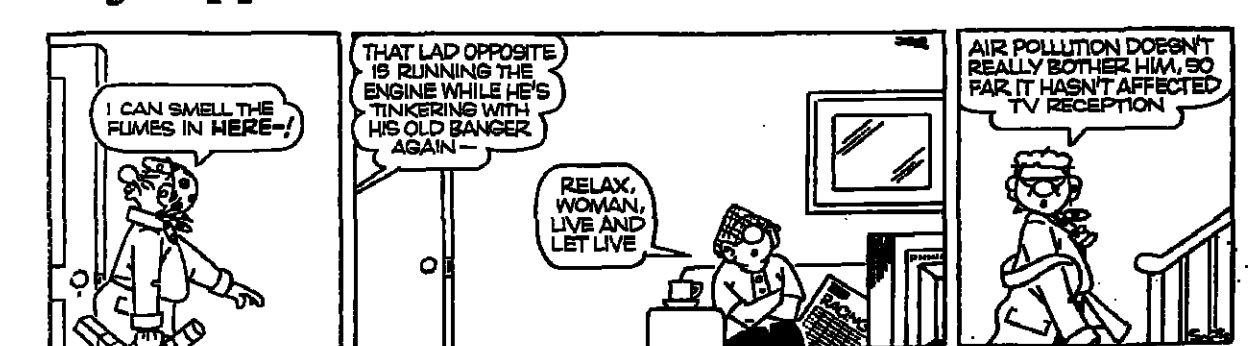
THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



Peanuts



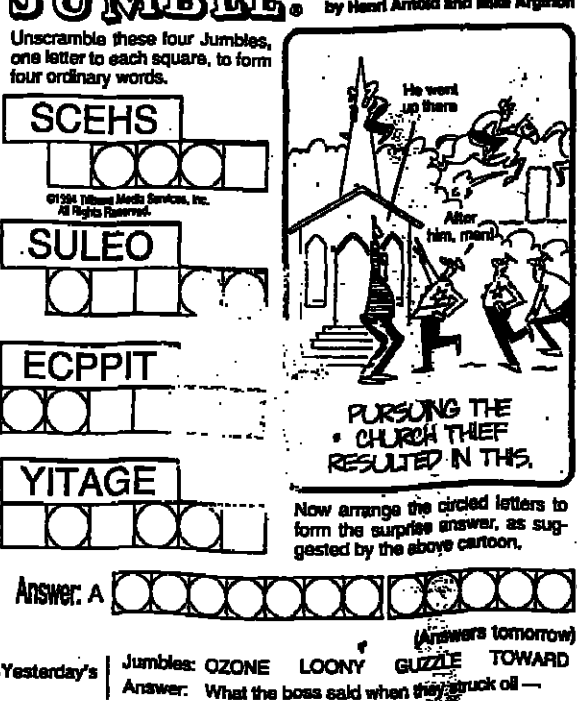
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1994

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Arrive on time for any appointment today and expect to enjoy yourself to a greater extent than you were expecting. Others that you meet will be under the influence of the triple positive aspects.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Do whatever will please those who have power over your affairs this Saturday. Talk plans over with individuals who can help you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Contact those who can assist you in getting your ideas down to a workable level. Make time to travel to exciting location with your mate.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Find out which persons in business can assist you the most with finer methods for handling your practical outlets towards your success.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be just as practical with partners as they are and forget emotionalism. Take time for entertainment in the evening.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be very practical with your partners and don't go intellectual on them or they will resent it. Be more concerned with kin in the evening.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make those special talents you have work like a charm and you may even become famous as a result. Handle some chores for your mate.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get conditions improved at home so that time and energy are loosed off. Keep an eye on the costs of any entertaining you are involved in.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a fine day for getting at all that shopping and errands ahead of you and completing them. Handle long awaited correspondence.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Study your property well and know if it needs repair. Know what your liabilities are and how to remain within your everyday budget.

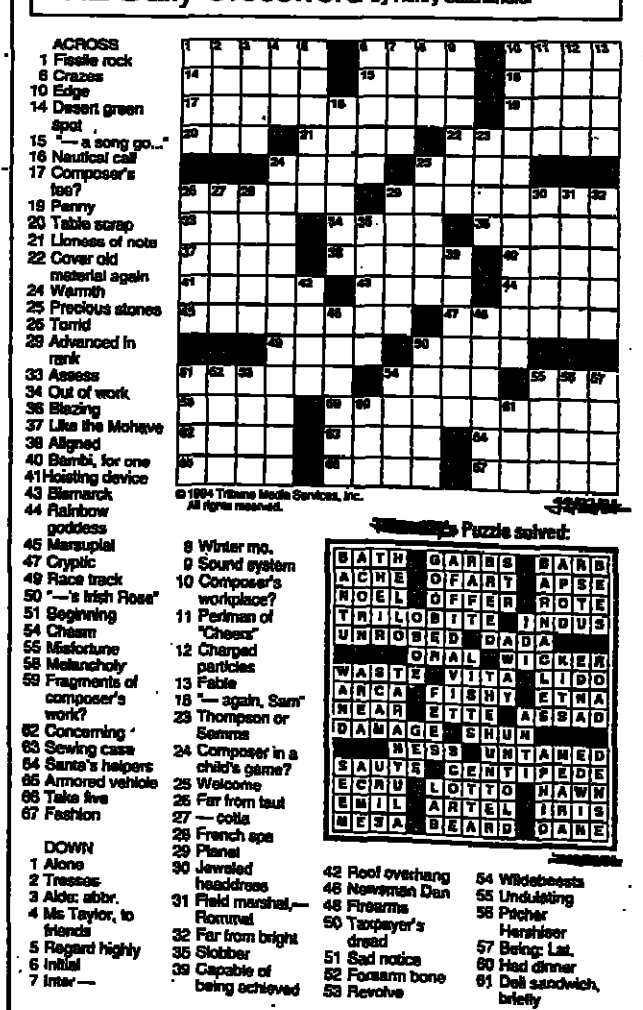
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Make repairs which are needed to your property to retain its value. Don't neglect Saturday marketing and shopping which has been delayed.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Private study can bring about some new and worthwhile course of action. Plan how to reconcile with a good friend over some disagreement.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Greater effort on your part can help to gain your personal aims. Repay any social debts you may have incurred with close friends.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise - Zircon

THE Daily Crossword by Henry Salshend



Business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Department of Customs works out estimates for prices of cars

According to a formula worked out by the Department of Customs to facilitate the calculations for prices of new and used cars, the reduction ranges between 22.5 per cent and 27 per cent for new cars and between 23.4 per cent and 45.6 per cent for used cars. The calculations take into consideration the year of manufacture of the car and the size of the engine. For example the price of a new car with an engine size of 1,500 cc has gone down by 22.5 per cent, from 1,500 cc to 2,000 cc (15.5 per cent); 2,001 cc to 2,500 (19 per cent); 2,501 cc to 3,000 (17.6 per cent) and over 3,000 cc (27 per cent). The price of a five-year old car with an engine size of 1,500 cc went down by 35 per cent; 1,500 cc to 2,000 cc (30 per cent); 2,001 cc to 2,500 cc (36 per cent); 2,501 cc to 3,000 cc (36 per cent) and over 3,000 cc (45.6 per cent). A two-year old car with an engine size of 1,500 cc should cost 27 per cent less; 1,501 cc to 2,000 cc (21 per cent); 2,001 cc to 2,500 cc (27 per cent); 2,501 cc to 3,000 cc (26 per cent) and over 3,000 cc (36.5 per cent) (Al Dustour).

An industrial and commercial delegation representing the weaving and clothing industry is currently visiting Israel. The delegation is participating in a conference on manufacturing clothes being held in Jerusalem under the name "Textiles of Peace". Participating in the conference are 250 businessmen from Jordan, Egypt, Palestine and Israel. The Jordanian delegation has visited many Israeli factories and discussed possible joint cooperation with their Israeli counterparts as well as the possibility of benefitting from Israeli expertise in the textile field. (Al Aswaq).

The latest Audit Bureau report for 1993 has revealed 54 cases of embezzlement, forgery and fraud which are all still being seen by courts. The total amount embezzled was given as JD 955,146, 146,753 French francs; 71,853 Saudi riyals and \$8,675. According to the report, JD 42,648 and all the Saudi riyals are still missing. All the French francs and the U.S. dollars were recovered. The ministry where most of the embezzlement and forgeries occurred was the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment and the municipal and rural councils in addition to the Amman municipality where there were 11 cases involving JD 86,138 of which only JD 14,780 were recovered. The Ministry of Health came second with six cases involving JD 1,782; most of it was recovered. The Ministry of Supply had also six cases of embezzlement involving JD 511,661 (Al Aswaq).

Jordan Cement Factories Co. Ltd started exporting 100,000 tonnes of cement to Syria. The shipments began last month at a rate of 2,500 tonnes a day after a previous agreement expired at the end of October under that agreement Syria imported a total of 250,000 tonnes. The company produces 3.5 million tonnes a year and supplies the local market with 2.7 million with the rest going for export (Al Ra'i).

Aqaba's agricultural directorate earned JD 100,000 last month. The veterinary quarantine accounted for JD 93,000 of the total having examined 30,000 of heads of sheep of which 6,000 heads were admitted to the local market and the rest were reexported (Al Dustour).

The first shipment of Jordanian-made gas cookers worth about \$30,000 has arrived in Oman. The Jordanian company is looking for an agent to market its product in Oman (Al Dustour).

COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PERCENT	OFFERING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
AMMAN BANK	589,510	185.000	185.000	185.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	2,544,234	4.400	4.400	4.500
BANK OF JORDAN	15,453	3.900	3.900	3.825
KHAWARIZM INVESTMENT BANK	11,338	1.600	1.500	1.625
JORDANIAN INVESTMENT BANK	62,668	2.800	2.800	2.800
JORDAN SECURITIES BANK	47,010	5.600	5.500	5.510
JORDAN TRUST BANK	73,704	7.010	7.010	7.000
AMMAN TRUST BANK	4,983	7.710	7.600	7.700
JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	113,009	2.700	2.700	2.700
JORDAN SECURITIES BANK	14,748	3.700	3.700	3.700
JORDAN TRUST BANK	395,213	4.900	4.900	4.900
JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	18,080	3.200	3.200	3.125
JORDAN TRUST BANK	148,280	1.520	1.520	1.520
JORDAN TRUST BANK	24,700	1.700	1.600	1.725
JORDAN TRUST BANK	1,920	1.320	1.320	1.320
JORDAN TRUST BANK	421	6.200	6.210	6.210
JORDAN TRUST BANK	2,518	2.520	2.520	2.520
JORDAN TRUST BANK	1,575	3.050	3.050	3.050
JORDAN TRUST BANK	4,800	3.000	3.000	3.000
JORDAN TRUST BANK	6,564	3.900	3.900	3.900
JORDAN TRUST BANK	24,000	1.540	1.540	1.540
JORDAN TRUST BANK	47,406	1.520	1.520	1.520
JORDAN TRUST BANK	54,273	4.400	4.400	4.400
JORDAN TRUST BANK	5,927	0.950	0.950	0.950
JORDAN TRUST BANK	540	1.710	1.710	1.710
JORDAN TRUST BANK	59,375	5.220	5.220	5.220
JORDAN TRUST BANK	140,164	3.220	3.220	3.220
JORDAN TRUST BANK	28,137	2.440	2.440	2.440
JORDAN TRUST BANK	1,977	1.400	1.350	1.370
JORDAN TRUST BANK	12,547	1.270	1.270	1.270
JORDAN TRUST BANK	2,550	11.400	11.400	11.400
JORDAN TRUST BANK	6,480	0.800	0.800	0.800
JORDAN TRUST BANK	11,400	11.400	11.400	11.400
JORDAN TRUST BANK	11,500	2.510	2.470	2.470
JORDAN TRUST BANK	11,500	3.310	3.320	3.320
JORDAN TRUST BANK	2,551	1.360	1.360	1.360
JORDAN TRUST BANK	3,179	1.280	1.280	1.270
JORDAN TRUST BANK	672,080	2.920	2.920	2.920
JORDAN TRUST BANK	54,351	2.700	2.610	2.610
JORDAN TRUST BANK	20,423	5.450	5.440	5.410
JORDAN TRUST BANK	26,480	1.200	1.200	1.200
JORDAN TRUST BANK	7,864	4.840	4.810	4.800
JORDAN TRUST BANK	43,455	8.000	7.900	7.950
JORDAN TRUST BANK	231,460	5.700	5.710	5.750
JORDAN TRUST BANK	7,515	2.240	2.270	2.240
JORDAN TRUST BANK	11,380	2.940	2.920	2.920
JORDAN TRUST BANK	23,746	2.720	2.780	2.780
JORDAN TRUST BANK	146,297	17.400	17.300	16.950
JORDAN TRUST BANK	19,234	4.010	4.010	4.000
JORDAN TRUST BANK	29,219	7.100	7.000	6.950
JORDAN TRUST BANK	49,403	8.840	8.950	8.950
JORDAN TRUST BANK	975	3.250	3.250	3.250
JORDAN TRUST BANK	9,342	1.400	1.390	1.390
JORDAN TRUST BANK	8,537	4.200	4.210	4.210
JORDAN TRUST BANK	13,774	2.220	2.290	2.290
JORDAN TRUST BANK	57,478	1.580	1.580	1.570
JORDAN TRUST BANK	5,970	6.610	6.610	6.610
JORDAN TRUST BANK	22,751	8.170	8.170	8.170
JORDAN TRUST BANK	812	5.450	5.450	5.450
JORDAN TRUST BANK	2,404	2.400	2.400	2.400
JORDAN TRUST BANK	23,574	2.400	2.780	2.770
JORDAN TRUST BANK	15,062	1.800	1.800	1.770
JORDAN TRUST BANK	21,827	4.200	4.210	4.200
JORDAN TRUST BANK	44,329	2.680	2.670	2.720
GRAND TOTAL	6,917,094			

Financial Markets

Currency	1 MTN	3 MTN	6 MTN	12 MTN
U.S. Dollar	5.75	6.06	6.56	7.06
Sterling Pound	5.44	6.72	6.68	7.25
Deutsche Mark	5.18	5.18	5.21	5.68
Swiss Franc	3.68	4.00	4.31	4.66
French Franc	5.63	6.00	6.38	6.88
Japanese Yen	2.18	2.18	2.31	2.43
European Currency Unit	6.75	6.35	6.60	7.03

Month	USD/Dir	JD/Dir	Month	USD/Dir	JD/Dir
Gold	381.80	7.65	Silver	4.81	0.110

Currency	Buy	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7030	0.7050
Sterling Pound	1.0840	1.0894
Deutsche Mark	0.4444	0.4456
Swiss Franc	0.5265	0.5289
French Franc	0.1288	0.1294
Japanese Yen	0.6988	0.7023
Dutch Guilder	0.3971	0.3997
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira	0.0476	0.0488
Belgian Franc	*****	*****

Currency	Buy	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.6400	1.6620
Lebanese Lira	0.041500	0.042612
Saudi Riyal	0.1660	0.1680
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3000	2.3600
Omani Riyal	0.1910	0.1932
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2150
Omani Riyal	1.6070	1.6260
UAE Dirham	0.1906	0.1917
Greek Drachma	0.2636	0.3180
Cypriot Pound	1.4040	1.5390

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) - Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Friday

U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.3994/04	Canadian dollar
	1.5736/46	Deutsche marks
	1.7612/22	Dutch guilders
	1.3286/96	Swiss francs
	32.33/37	Belgian francs
	5.4415/65	French francs
	1638.29/2	Italian lire
	100.10/20	Japanese yen
	7.4750/50	Swedish crowns
	6.8640/90	Norwegian crowns
	6.1700/50	Danish crowns
One sterling	\$1.5474/84	
One ounce of gold	\$381.25/381.75	

Trading, prices remain low at stock market

By a Jordan Times staff reporter

AMMAN - Trading and prices at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) remained low last week as the year drew to a close and investors awaited performance figures of companies expected to be announced in January.

The weekly report of the AFM said turnover last week was JD 7.3 million, down 22.3 per cent from the previous week's JD 9.4 million.

The general share price index based on 60 major companies closed at 144.41 points, down 0.75 points or 0.53 per cent from the week's opening of 145.16 points, the report said.

The insurance sector index closed at 128.61 points, down 0.2 per cent, the service sector at 130.41, down 1.3 per cent, and the banks and financial institutions sector at 159.29 points, down 0.2 per cent.

The insurance sector index closed 1.7 point, or 1.2 per cent higher at 137.08 points. The AFM report said 2.5 million shares changed hands under 2,595 contracts concluded during the week. Shares of 80 companies were traded, with 18 of them closing with gains, 46 showing declines and 16 maintaining their prices.

Commercial banks and financial institutions accounted for JD 3.89 million, or 53.4 per cent of the turnover, followed by industrial stock with JD 2.53 million, or 34.7 per cent, the services sector with JD 850,000, or 11.7 per cent, and the insurance sector with JD 18,000, or 0.2 per cent. Brokers attributed the decline in the market to a waiting mode adopted by investors ahead of year-end figures. "Most of them appear to know how the respective companies fared during 1994, and are awaiting the formal figures to be released," said a broker.

Diamond sales fall but De Beers sees some sparkle

LONDON (R) - South African diamond giant De Beers has reported a fall in sales of rough diamonds through its Central Organisation (CSO) but by sales of Russian gems outside the CSO network.

The group said demand in the first half of 1994 was buoyant but that the outbreak of plague in India and further sales of Russian gems outside the CSO, through which De Beers dominates the world diamond market, had hit sales in the second half.

But the market for jewellery had stayed resilient amid tough trading conditions, said the company.

Sales of rough diamonds fell by 2.7 per cent in 1994 to \$4.25 billion, De Beers said in a statement.

De Beers has been fighting a running battle against the leakage of Russian diamonds, which the industry estimated amounted to some \$500 million in the first half of the year.

It has held talks with officials in Moscow over the persistent leaks and the renewal of a five-year agreement which expires next year. The current deal commits Russia to sell 95 per cent of all its rough diamonds through the CSO.

Russia is the world's second largest producer of diamonds after De Beers with a stockpile estimated at around \$5 billion.

After good demand in the first six months, the CSO cut supplies in the second half due to a build up in stocks at diamond cutting centres and concern on the profitability of cutting houses, said De Beers.

Other factors which served to affect trade were the outbreak of pneumonic plague in India and continuing evidence of Russian rough diamonds being sold direct to the outside market," the company said in a statement.

The Surat area in western India, where the plague outbreak was centred, has the world's largest concentration of diamond processors, and the disruption there meant stocks had piled up.

UAE banks urged to merge to boost earnings

ABU DHABI (AFP) - United Arab Emirates (UAE) banks should start merging to boost earnings which are being eroded by growing competition and higher costs, a senior UAE banker said in an interview.

Although the combined profits of UAE banks hit a record level in 1993, some recorded lower earnings and others suffered from a decline in net income relating to their capital, said Abdullah Mohammad Saleh, chief executive of the state-controlled National Bank of Dubai (NBD), the biggest UAE bank.

He said the increase in the costs of banking operations were due to introduction of new services like computers, teller machines and the advanced SWIFT financial transfer system.

"I am not saying I only would like to see banks merge but I believe mergers have become a pressing need if we want to meet the challenges of the 21st century," he told Al Itihad daily.

There are some banks which still do not meet capital adequacy standards and others are unable to cover their losses in previous years. This has made these banks incapable of engaging in new operations or boosting earnings.

Mr. Saleh's proposal is the latest in a series of calls by the central bank and national banks for mergers to cut the number of banks in the oil-rich Gulf country and to create large units capable of facing competition from world banks.

The UAE is classified as an over-banked country, with 19 national banks and 28 foreign units for a population of only two million. This is in contrast with Saudi Arabia, which has 12 banks for a population of around 16 million.

The central bank has said it would support any merging banks as part of reforms aimed at boosting their capital to avoid fresh bank crises and meet adequacy requirements set by the Bank for International Settlement (BIS).

Apart from incentives, the reforms included instructions for banks to have a capital of at least 40 million dirhams (\$10.89 million) and a minimum 10 per cent in adequacy, the ratio between shareholders' equity and assets. The level is two points higher than the BIS's eight per cent

Such instructions have pushed up the banks' shareholders' equity, which include capital and provisions, to 20.3 billion dirhams (\$5.53 billion) at the end of September from 18.6 billion dirhams (\$5.06 billion) a year ago. Assets rose to 162 billion dirhams (44.14 billion) from around 150 billion dirhams (\$40.87 billion).

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كردية امي لاند

Cleveland, Indiana lead Central Division

OAKLAND (R)—The Golden State Warriors defeated the Washington Bullets 107-87 adding insult to the injury suffered by star forward Chris Webber in his first game against his former team.

Webber, traded by the Warriors to the Bullets last month after a long holdout, dislocated his left shoulder in the third quarter. He returned to the bench in street clothes and will have X-rays.

Tom Gugliotta, whom the Warriors acquired for Webber, scored 18 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to help Golden State snap a 10-game losing streak.

Latrell Sprewell, who was fined for missing practice Wednesday, scored 26 points.

"It was exciting," said Gugliotta, whose new team is just 2-14 since the deal. "I think an player who gets traded away wants to play well against the team they get traded from and I had that same incentive."

"He was definitely super-charged and with the right reasons," Warriors center Rony Seikaly said. "He wanted to show his old team he was the man and they made a mistake."

The Bullets have lost eight straight games and are 2-13 since acquiring Webber, last year's rookie of the year. Webber scored 14 points and

grabbed six rebounds before getting hurt.

In New York, John Williams flipped in a driving bank shot with 20 seconds left then added a pair of free throws with 3.7 seconds to go to give the Cleveland Cavaliers a 93-90 comeback win over the crumbling Knicks.

Bobby Phillips scored a season-high 24 points for the Cavs and Mark Price poured in four three-pointers in the fourth quarter as Cleveland overcame the Knicks, who led by as many as 16 points in the second quarter.

The Knicks, last season's NBA runner-up, lost their third straight at home, while Cleveland, winners of seven in a row, moved into a tie with Indiana atop the Central Division.

Cleveland trailed 67-62 entering the fourth quarter but rallied behind Price, who scored 14 of his 19 points in the period. He missed Monday's win at Chicago with bruised ribs.

"In the second half, I tried to get into the flow of things," said Price. "I have been a little rusty lately. After I had a shot or two I got into it."

Charles Oakley scored 19 points and grabbed 13 rebounds for the Knicks, losers of four in a row and six of eight.

"Things are going bad right now," said Knicks guard

John Starks, battling a long shooting slump. "When it rains, it pours."

In Seattle, Gary Payton's driving layup with 7.7 seconds to play lifted the SuperSonics to their 11th straight home victory 103-101 over the Dallas Mavericks.

Payton, who led Seattle with 28 points, scored six in a 13-2 run to end the game. He also hit a layup with 30 seconds remaining to tie the game at 101-101.

At 101-101, Dallas' Jamal Mashburn drove the lane but had his pass intercepted by Kendall Gill, who whirled and threw a fullcourt pass to a streaking Payton.

"Gary and Kendall ran the court with such great speed, with such great finishes and

great runs," gushed Seattle coach George Karl.

Mashburn led Dallas with 24 points.

In Houston, Kenny Smith had 25 points, including a key three-pointer in the fourth quarter, as the NBA champion Rockets took a 114-76 victory over the Phoenix Suns to snap the visitors' seven-game winning streak.

Houston won for only the fifth time in 13 games.

"I've always felt we're a better team when we're backed into a corner and a great team is coming into town," said Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich.

Hakeem Olajuwon had 24 points and 15 rebounds for Houston. Danny Manning had 23 points for the Suns,

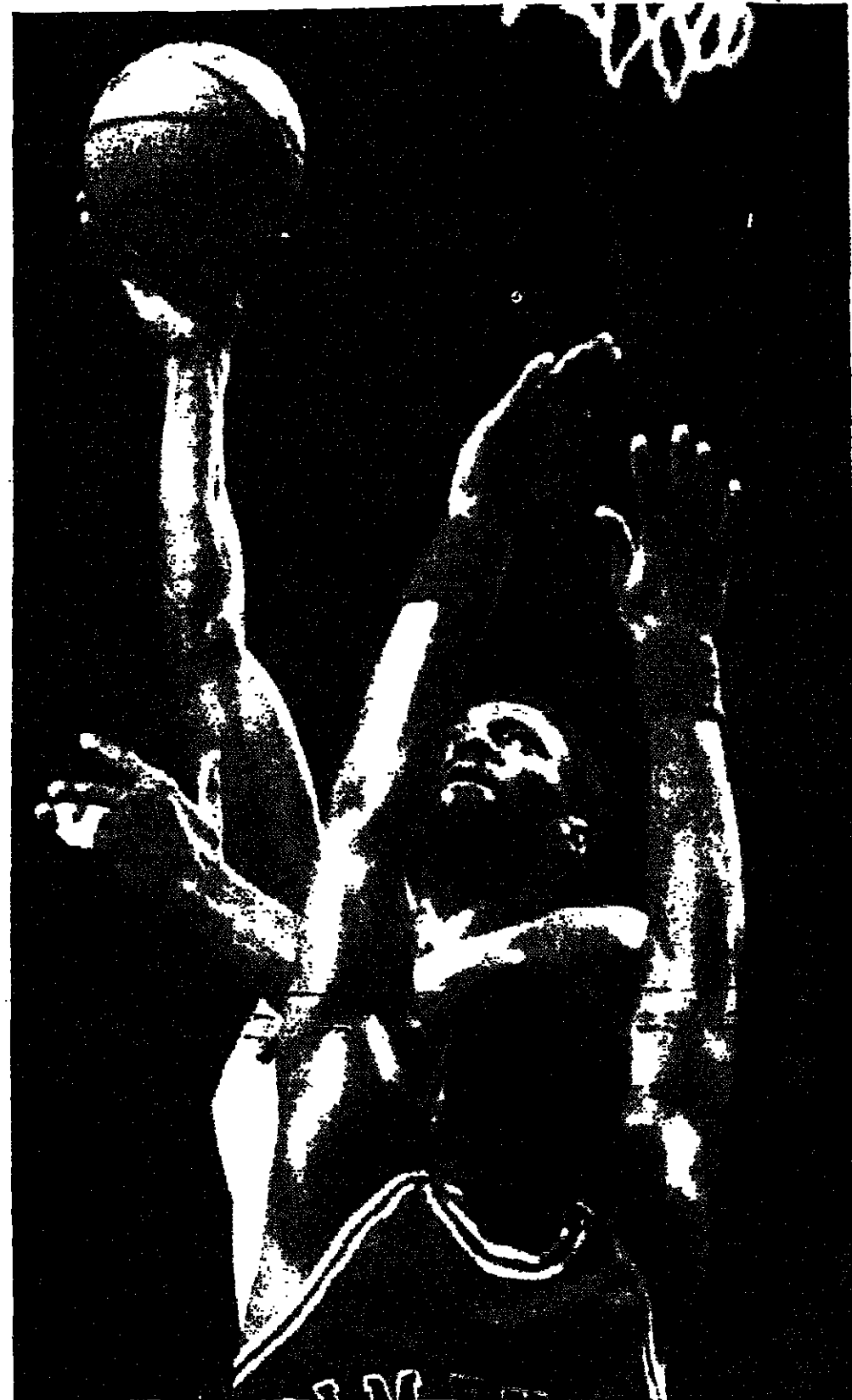
who were connected only 39 per cent of their shots.

In Sacramento, Olden Polynice and Walt Williams each scored 17 points as the Kings gradually pulled away from the Minnesota Timberwolves on the way to a 109-89 victory.

Lionel Simmons added 16 points for the Kings, who have won five of their last six home games.

The woeful T-Wolves, who committed 25 turnovers, were led by Isaiah Rider with 27 points.

In Charlotte, defence proved the best offence for the Hornets who swarmed their way to a 103-91 win over the slumping Philadelphia 76ers.



Indiana Pacers' Dale Davis shoots over Chicago Bulls' Dickey Simpkins during the game won by the Pacers 107-99 (AFP photo)

Memorable Sports Quotes from 1994

By The Associated Press

"He was the only person in this country who made us feel proud to be Brazilians. He gave us dignity, and to see him race was a relief from all the corruption, misery and poverty that surrounds us." — 23-year-old law student Fernando Machado Lemos as he waited to see Ayrton Senna's coffin.

"Formula One cars are too light for the speed they run at. But this tragedy woke up many people who were sleeping. It's necessary to review all the rules." — Emerson Fittipaldi on the death of Ayrton Senna.

"I was proud to compete against him. professionally, Senna was the only driver I respected. In Senna's honour, I will never sit in a Formula One car again." — Alain Prost.

"Me, they killed me, I'm completely dead. They cut my legs away from me. I think they've now cut my entire body away. I don't know where I stand. I can't find myself." — Diego Maradona after being banned from the World Cup.

"I've been looking for new kitchen curtains for a long time." — Norwegian goalkeeper Erik Thorstvedt after trading jerseys with Mexican keeper Jorge Campos at the World Cup.

"I'm a real popular mayor. But I don't want to stretch my popularity that far." — Dallas mayor Steve Bartlett about a World Cup 1994 proposal to ban alcohol sales during the tournament.

"He's a perfectionist. If he was married to Demi Moore, he'd expect her to be a good cook." — Former U.S. National soccer team captain Rick Davis on U.S. coach Bora Milutinovic.

"I get letters from Princess Di thanking me for taking her out of the headlines. Former England Manager Graham Taylor, who was fired after not qualifying the English for the World Cup.

"You've got to be joking. Even the Pope would have second thoughts about taking the job." — Switzerland national soccer team manager Roy Hodgson about inquiring for the job as England coach.

"Not so long ago we were teaching the Americans how to play. Now I've got work permits for them piling up on my desk." — English soccer players union head Gordon

Taylor. "I don't think, experience-wise, that I have to get hit in the face with a skunk four times before I smell it." — Bill Parcells, coach of the American National Football League's new England Patriots who says he knows he was to change his game plan every week to minimize mistakes.

"Sometimes you're a bug, and sometimes you're a windshield, and tonight we were the bug. They squashed us." — U.S. coach Ron Wilson after a 6-2 opening-round loss to Sweden at the world ice hockey championships.

"It'll take me two months to get in shape, and I'll be back in the ring, and believe me, my lips won't move." — Ray Mercer, heavyweight contender, after being acquired of making a mid-night offer of \$100,000 for an underdog opponent to take a dive.

"I exercised the ghost once and forever." — George Foreman, 45, after knocking out Michael Moorer to win the IB and WBA heavyweight championships, on his loss to Mohammad Ali 20 years ago.

"The thing I miss most in my life right now is that element of risk. I really enjoyed putting it all on the line. God wasn't ready to take me, but he wanted to slow me down." — Paralyzed former world motorcycle champion Wayne Rainey.

"I'd just like to say I'm really sorry I interfered." — Tonya Harding, after pleading guilty to conspiring to hinder prosecution in the attack on rival skater Nancy Kerrigan.

"Probably everybody needs (Monica Seles) back. I think that's what everybody needs so I wouldn't have to answer that question anymore." — Steffi Graf.

"I've been at the twilight of my career longer than most people have had their careers." — Martina Navratilova, who retired after the 1994 season.

"For a long time, I barely raced any downhill, but I hope that I can now calculate the risks quite well. If your time is up, it's up — it could happen in the street, anywhere." — Ulirike Maier in an interview four weeks before her death.

"Right now, I have no reason to believe the Chinese Federation is behind it. We have no proof of a systematic, governmental or federation doping campaign — FIFA secret." — German soccer players union head Gordon

Jordan Handball Championship Ahli, Arabi retain top spots

By Rofaiah Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Al Arabi beat Al Hussein 27/23 Thursday at the Al Hassan Sports City in Irbid to remain in the lead with Al Ahli after the 10th week of the Kingdom's Handball Championship.

Arab/Hussein 27/23: In an exciting start, Al Hussein surprised Al Arabi who looked weak and unorganised in defence. Al Hussein's Maher Mahas took advantage and scored for his team.

Al Arabi, stunned by the strong attack of Al Hussein, concentrated more depending on Mohammad Abu Lail and Moufag Fateh Allah to get through Hussein's strong defence to

end the first half 14/10. In the second half the match witnessed an unusual curve in which Al Hussein pressed the defence area of Al Arabi and succeeded in moving ahead and lead 18/16.

In the 24th minutes unusual events took place during which one spectator hit Al Hussein's Maher Abu Lail and chaos spread forcing the referee to stop the match for 15 minutes until order was regained by the police.

Al Arabi won the match 27/23.

Ahli/Salt 42/32: Al Ahli stayed in the lead with 18 points after beating Al Salt 42/32 at the Sports Palace in Amman.

Al Ahli played with confidence depending on Mahmoud Taha Hamash-

neh and Nabil Jamil to build successful attacks from the wings Hussein Ahmad and Issa Abed Allah to end the first half 20/15.

Al Salt looked confused and hesitated especially in passing balls and that gave Al Ahli a bigger chance to end the match with 42/32 score.

Amman/Orthodox: Meanwhile in another match Amman scored a 27/24 win over Al Orthodox and moved to fifth position with six points.

Al Ahli and Al Arabi are the top two with 18 points but Al Ahli are in first place on goal differences.

Salt third with 8 points, Hussein with 7 points, are fourth.

Al Orthodox are last with 2 points.

STANDINGS

Eastern Conference Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Orlando	19	5	.792	—
New York	12	11	.522	6½
New Jersey	12	15	.444	8½
Boston	10	14	.417	9
Philadelphia	8	16	.333	11
Miami	7	15	.318	11
Washington	6	16	.273	12

Central Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Indiana	15	7	.682	—
Cleveland	16	8	.667	—
Charlotte	14	10	.583	2
Chicago	11	12	.478	4½
Detroit	9	13	.409	6
Atlanta	10	15	.400	6½
Milwaukee	7	16	.304	8½

Western Conference

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Utah	18	8	.692	—
Houston	14	8	.636	2
Dallas	12	9	.571	3½
San Antonio	12	9	.571	3½
Denver	12	10	.545	4
Minnesota	5	19	.208	12

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Phoenix	18	6	.750	—
Seattle	16	7	.696	1½
LA Lakers	14	8	.636	3
Sacramento	13	10	.565	4½
Portland	11	10	.524	5½
Golden State	9	15	.375	9
L.A. Clippers	3	21	.125	15

Results of NBA

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Utah	103	—	—	94
Charlotte	103	—	—	91
Cleveland	93	—	—	90
Houston	114	—	—	106
Seattle	103	—	—	101
Golden State	107	—	—	87
Sacramento	109	—	—	89

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WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMAR HIRSCH
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JUST A SPOONFUL OF DECEPTION

North-South vulnerable. West deals.

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♥ Q 10 9
♦ 6 3 2
♣ A 8 6

EAST
♠ 7 3
♥ J 5
♦ J 9 8 7
♣ K Q J 10 9 2 7 4 3

THE BIDDING
West North East South
3♥ Pass Pass 4♦
Pass 4♥ Pass 5♥
Pass 6♥ Pass Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

Among the most colorful figures on the bridge scene today in Pakistan is Zia Mahmood, now virtually a resident of the Big Apple. Besides his flair at the table, he is an active promoter of the game, a columnist and an author of a popular book, *Bridge 365 Ways*. Here is an example of Zia at work in a high-stake rubber-bridge game at one of New York's premier clubs.

Sitting West, Zia took advantage of the vulnerability to preempt with

three clubs. South can't bid to show a powerful hand and North judged well to raise to slam when South introduced the heart suit for the first time at the five-level.

West led the king of clubs, taken by dummy's ace. Zia's next natural plan was to play two rounds of trumps, then worry later about whether there would still be a trump in dummy to take care of the fourth diamond, if necessary. But when declarer led a trump to the ace, Zia smoothly dropped the jack.

This innocent bit of deception prevented declarer with an alternative. Afraid that a trump continuation would give East the opportunity to win with the king and return a heart, removing dummy's last trump and leaving South dependent on a 5-3 diamond split, it seemed reasonable to play West for either a singleton trump or K J. In that case, it would be safe for declarer to allow the trump and test diamond by cashing the three top cards in the suit. That would guarantee the slam, whenever diamonds were 3-3 (declarer would then lead another trump), or when diamonds were 4-2 and East held the length, as well as three hearts or a live doubleton.

A mortified South saw West ruff the third diamond with a low trump. East's king of trumps was the set-

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The Episcopal Church in Amman and Aqaba

Christmas Services in English

Amman: English language Anglican services are held in the Church of the Redeemer, First Circle, near the Al-Nivah School. Telephone 652826.

Saturday 24th. December. Christmas Eve 4:00 p.m. Crib Service for Children.

11:15 p.m. Midnight Mass.

Sunday 25th. December. Christmas Day.

11:00 a.m. Joint English and Arabic Eucharist.

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At the Missions to Seamen Church. Telephone 318416/7.

Saturday 24th. December. Christmas Eve.

11:30 p.m. Midnight Mass.

Sunday 25th. December. Christmas Day. 10:00 a.m. Eucharist both in English.



Italian skier, Alberto Tomba hits a gate on his way in the first run of the men's World Cup slalom Dec. 20 (AFP photo)

Alberto Tomba ready for elusive world crown

ALTA BADIA (R) — In eight years at the top, Alberto Tomba has had his share of ups and downs. But after five wins this season "La Bomba" is back, more explosive than ever, ready to claim the world ski titles that have eluded him since his debut in 1986.

The Italian has been so impressive that he has started to believe he can become world champion at last in February and even lift the World Cup, usually the trophy for all-rounders.

"I'll start to think about the World Cup after the worlds in Sierra Nevada. I don't want to get nervous about it. I just want to win races and then I'll have time to think," he said.

"There will be a lot of downhills in January as well as two combined events and

I don't think I can still be in the lead before the worlds," added Tomba who is currently top of the overall standings.

In spite of their poor start to the season, Tomba thinks World Cup holder Kjetil Andre Aamodt of Norway and Luxembourg's Marc Girardelli, both at ease in all Alpine events, will soon strike back.

But the Italian, who finished second in the World Cup in 1988 and 1992, has more trumps up his sleeve this season. He wins giant slaloms again, after a two-year gap, as he demonstrated in Alta Badia on Thursday.

With four successive slalom victories this season, Tomba seems to have rediscovered the exceptional talent which made him a star in the 1987-88 season. He won 11 races then, including two Olympic golds.

"I think I'm even better than I was then because the level of competition has increased radically," he said.

The main difference between the Tomba of old and the wiser, settled man that he is now is that he used to compete in super-giant slaloms to score vital World Cup points. His best result in a World Cup Super-G was fourth in 1988.

Since 1989 and a bad fall in Val D'Isere, he decided to shun speed events to concentrate on slaloms but he will have to change his mind to retain hopes of landing the grand prize.

His coach Gustavo Thoeni said he hoped to persuade him to enter at least a few super-giants. Twelve special events and nine technical events are scheduled before the end of the season.

"Alberto has what it takes. He only needs to be convinced about it," he said.

In the meantime, Tomba will concentrate on winning the slalom world title he missed in 1989, 1991 and 1993. "I've worked very hard these last few years and it is paying off at last. Now I'm ready for the worlds," he said.

A dog of a year for sports and drugs

PARIS (AFP) — When the Chinese heralded in the year of the dog last January little did the country's sports authorities realise just what a dog of a year it would turn out to be.

By the time December came, China's sports machine had been disgraced by one of the biggest drugs scandals in sports history.

Their much-honoured women's swimming team had turned from a collection of world champions to a sorry group of cheats who had reached the top by taking drugs.

The Chinese expose — thanks to drug testing at the Asian Games in Hiroshima — was a time bomb waiting to explode. Since the demise of East Germany there has been widespread rumours amongst international sports groups that China imported not only East German coaches but the East German expertise at doping their athletes.

The 11 Chinese athletes busted in Hiroshima all tested positive for dihydrotestosterone (DHT). The drug was an East German favourite and, according to Don Catlin, director of the Olympic lab in Los Angeles, ten times more potent than testosterone.

"It's sophisticated doping, not bush league," said Catlin recently.

The China Connection has only half helped underline how drugs have seemingly become a key player in international success.

A host of top athletes from

the west are strongly suspected of using drugs but despite the use of widespread testing the private chemists and doctors employed by the athletes are more skillful than the testers.

The victims of this squalid tale may indeed be the convicted athletes like 17-year-old swimmer Lu Bin, who believed sincerely that she was the fastest woman in the world after breaking the 200 metres individual medley record in October.

Like Britain's Diane Modahl, she was convinced of her innocence. And who can say she chose to be pumped up with steroids and advanced masking agents, which sports medicine experts know can only be produced through intensive research and development.

Disgraced Liu and the others may be more sinned against than sinning.

Benetton and Michael Schumacher kept motor racing running on a sleaze slick. The team were beset by allegations but nothing too disgraceful was ever proved, though Benetton were fined heavily for a string of minor rule breaches.

Schumacher became the first German and the youngest world champion ever. He won the title by a point from Damon Hill after a controversial collision at Adelaide.

In July at Silverstone, he was banned for two races for ignoring a black flag and was disqualified five hours after winning the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa-Francorchamps.

because his car was illegal. Cricketer's mythology of fair was debunked with Michael Atherton's England captaincy in crisis more than once.

A whiff of sleaze was in the air as details of Atherton's ball-tampering against South Africa in the second Test at Lord's emerged.

In the next Test at the Oval he was fined 1,200 pounds and severely reprimanded for dissent by Test match referee Peter Burge.

Atherton, whose position was already shaky after the dirt-in-the-pocket affair, came under extreme pressure to resign.

At Lord's, Atherton was fined 2,000 pounds for the tampering incident and for later misleading Burge during a subsequent inquiry.

They do things on a grander scale in America, where everyone loves a winner. The entourage of ice skater Tonya Harding devised a novel way to ensure she could not fail. They used an iron bar on her rival Nancy Kerrigan.

But Tonya got her come-uppance and is serving three years probation. Battered Nancy still went to the Olympics, finishing with the silver medal and a place in every true American heart. Even her halo is slipping, accused of running away with her coach and marriage-breaking.

Meanwhile Tonya wants bigger breasts to attract bigger pay cheques for her modelling work and plans to undergo cosmetic surgery. There's no cheat like a big

cheat and vertically challenged Diego Maradona fits the bill. His roller-coaster career after his World Cup drugs bust continues.

A court prosecutor wants him jailed for four years for wounding journalists with an air rifle in February in one of the many low points of his career.

You have to admire plucky Diego who retorted: "What I did is nothing compared to the acts carried out by the military during the dictatorship." And they got away scot free.

Dictatorship is on the agenda in football's corridors of power. The European Football Federation, UEFA, are so upset at world football supreme Joao Havelange's antics that they have threatened to pull out of the 1998 World Cup and split from the august world body FIFA.

The Asian Football Confederation have also condemned Havelange's "autocracy" in back door deals over top committee appointments at October's executive meeting in New York.

Havelange, who got himself elected as FIFA president this year for a record sixth term, drew up the lists himself and brooked no discussion of the appointments.

Football in Britain may never clean up its act with Tottenham Hotspur winning an appeal over financial irregularities. The club had had six points deducted and were banned from the FA Cup after being found guilty on 35 charges of financial irregularities at an FA disciplinary hearing.

ities at an FA disciplinary hearing.

Arsenal have forgiven Paul Merson for cocaine abuse but their manager George Graham may not be able to wriggle out of a 'bung' probe so easily. He is alleged to have accepted a 285,000 pound illegal payment in a transfer deal. Graham denies the charge.

Then there is Bruce Grobbelaar, the worst corruption case in a generation. The former Liverpool goalkeeper, now with Southampton, is alleged to have fixed matches in exchange for big bucks from an Asian betting ring.

The Asians have enough trouble at home. More than 40 Malaysian players have been arrested since October 'or corruption, endemic in the region's soccer league.

Cheating is not confined to the big-money sports following reports recently of steroid abuse in the cloth-cap world of British pigeon racing, where birds on drugs fly higher, faster, longer.

Nor does sleaze have to come by the bucketful. Ponder the case of Olav Nygaard, who used an old-fashioned hose pipe. The Norwegian Olympic was told his team were unhappy with the ice on the speed skating track.

Nygaard snuck into the stadium overnight and sprayed their favoured spring water on the surface. He was found out and reprimanded, but takes the credit for three world records achieved on his ice-cocktail.

Lone Atlantic swimmer completes 10th of journey

PARIS (AFP) — Lone swimmer Guy Delage has completed a tenth of his 4,000-kilometre crossing of the Atlantic after taking the plunge a week ago, his Paris headquarters said on Friday.

The 42-year-old Frenchman has recovered from his seasickness and "I am feeling much better now that I have started eating again," he told French radio by satellite telephone.

The phone is installed aboard a raft drifting alongside Delage.

The swimmer said his severe seasickness had been caused by violent movements of the raft in a strong swell. He had originally planned to spend ten hours a day in the water, sleeping and eating aboard the raft.

"For the first three days I held out by spending very little time in the water. I had to deal with rough seas with a swell of four or five metres (13 to 16 feet). But now the wind has dropped and the sea is calmer," Delage said.

He said he had seen a shark on the first night after setting out from Mindelo in the Cape Verde islands, off West Africa, heading for the West Indies. The shark bit the raft's floating anchor. "It was OK, I wasn't in the water, and I haven't seen any others."

When aboard the raft, which is equipped with an automatic pilot, Delage continues heading westwards thanks to prevailing currents. When he completes his journey, he will have actually swum only about half of the 4,000 kilometres.

When swimming Delage is not attached to the raft. He is equipped with flippers and rests his arms on a small float fitted with survival equipment including an anti-shark gun.

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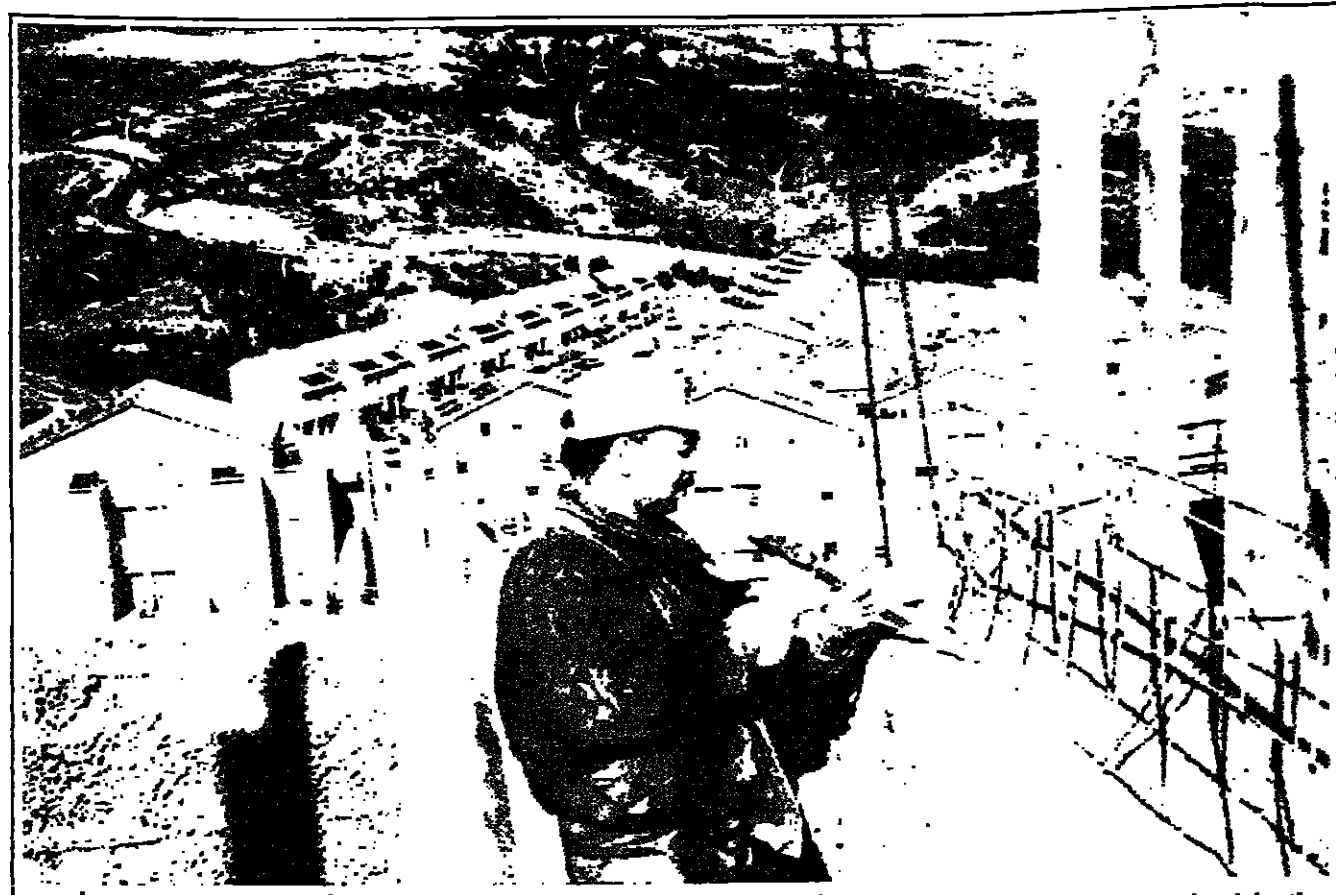
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SETTLEMENT: A worker builds a new house at the Maale Adumim Jewish settlement near Jerusalem on Friday. As thousands of new flats are built to strengthen Jewish

presence in the Jerusalem area, Palestinians who claim the land in the West Bank sometimes try to halt construction work (see page one) (AFP photo)

Iraq assails Saudi and Kuwaiti policies

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq launched a scathing attack on the rulers of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia Friday, condemning their foreign policy as "stupid."

"The leaders of Riyadh and Kuwait bear full responsibility for the stupid policy that is keeping things as they are in the Gulf and the Arab arena in general," Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz told the official agency INA.

Dr. Aziz said Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were "provoking hostility... despite a number of positive steps taken by Iraq toward Kuwait and other Gulf states."

Iraqi troops were ousted from Kuwait by U.S.-led coalition forces in Feb. 1991. Russia, France and China have set the ball rolling for lifting the four-year old U.N. economic embargo on Iraq, an official newspaper said here Friday.

"Their real policy is to serve U.S. interests. They spread instability to justify the United States' military occupation of the region and the plundering of its wealth," Aziz said.

At a three-day summit in Bahrain this week the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), comprising Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, refused to yield to Qatari pressure to ease sanctions against Iraq.

The GCC welcomed as a "positive step" Iraq's decision to recognise Kuwait on Nov. 10, but said Baghdad's compliance with international resolutions ending the 1991 Gulf war, the ruling Baath Party daily Al Thawra said.

"Russia's voice, along with France's and China's and supported by a clear majority requesting an end to injustice, has become stronger and more credible than" those of headline United States and Britain, it added.

Only "a minority still insists on harming Iraq, but it is getting smaller and will be limited to the United States and Britain which are blinded by their historic hatred of the Iraqi people and its leadership," it said.

"But we should not show too much optimism and expect a rapid lifting of the embargo," Al Thawra cautioned.

"But all new indications confirm that the lifting of the embargo has been put on

(Continued on page 7)

Baghdad has been pressing for a lifting of sanctions imposed after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

U.N. resolutions call for the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the return of Kuwaiti prisoners and war reparations.

Iranian factions wrangle over Shiite leadership

NICOSIA (R) — Differences among Iran's ruling clergy over the supreme leadership of Shiite Muslims and the nature of the Islamic state have burst into the open.

One faction has accused its rivals of fostering "new Salaman Rushdies" — referring to the British novelist branded an apostate by many Muslims and the biggest contemporary villain in the eyes of the Shiite clergy.

The severity of the attack underlines the importance of the debate among the heirs of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who differ over the balance of power between the Islamic state he established in 1979 and the Shiite clerical hierarchy.

Should the Islamic state, headed by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, dominate the religious Shiite hierarchy?

Or should the clerical establishment, which for centuries was outside the state structure and at times successfully challenged the governments of the time, be strengthened?

Iranian media vigorously promoted Ayatollah Khamenei as the top Shiite spiritual guide, or marja taqaddis (source of emulation), since a senior marja, contemporary Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Araki, died in Tehran last month.

Mr. Khamenei's supporters publicly voiced fears that if an apolitical ayatollah is allowed to gather a large following and therefore influence as a marja, he could undermine the Islamic state by issuing rulings against its policies.

But according to Salam, whose supporters have lost much of their power in government since Ayatollah Khomeini's death, the legitimacy of the state primarily rests on its popular support.

On Wednesday newspaper on Thursday about a passage in the daily Salam.

Salam — run by Mohammad Mousavi Khoeiniha, leader of the radical students who seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took its staff hostage in 1979 — had printed a reader's comment that the 14 Shiite "infallibles" including the Prophet Mohammad could be criticised for some of their actions.

The seemingly obscure exchange reflected the two papers' opposite views about the nature of the Islamic state.

Resalat represents the view that the Islamic republic is a divine government ruled by a top cleric who has all the powers of early Shiite imams who succeeded the Prophet. Its supporters are in majority in parliament.

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Christmas industry in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, occupied West Bank (R) — The week before Christmas the Jesus industry is in full swing in Bethlehem, catering to every religious taste from fine olive-wood carvings to bags of holy land soil on which Christ may once have walked.

Hundreds of tour and pilgrim buses daily disgorge the good and the glib into the town's shop-lined Manger Square and the supermarket-sized stores along the road from Jerusalem.

The good news this year for the Palestinian Authority which has just taken over tourism from the occupying Israeli military government is that the number of tourists is up. The bad news is that they are not buying.

Thousands of families here turn the gnarled olive trees dotting the hills into nativity sets, tree ornaments, rosaries, bible covers, crucifixes and candles. They also play some of their work with mother-of-pearl.

"Business locally is down 30 per cent this year and down 50 per cent on exports to the United States," says George Handal, who employs 50 men.

Their hair powdered with fine sawdust, they turn out rough figures on copying machines and finish the faces with bits like a dentist's drill.

"The last chisel-and-file sculptor died 30 years ago," said Mr. Handal, who inherited the factory from his father.

Some of the faces show the lack of the artist's hand. Crude, machine-tooled features stare down at a small lump in a manager, encased in a stable. The lot, slathered in varnish, would set you back \$20 for a few dollars more. You can wind up the five-pointed star above the stable and listen to "Silent Night."

Finer work, where the faces have a glimmer of human expression, costs \$50 and up, explains Salem Giacaman, one of a few big retailers in Manger Square who sees business picking up after the doldrums years of the Palestinian uprising and Gulf war.

He exports directly to the biggest olive-wood sculpture market, the United States, to shield himself from the ups and downs of the local economy.

Most merchants have also insured themselves by expanding their range of goods, spawning a new industry in holy land products. Israeli retailers have latched onto this, selling sachets of earth, phials of Jordan River water and cross-bedecked Jerusalem candles alongside Judaica.

Israel handed over the self-rule enclaves of Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank to the Palestine Liberation Organisation this year, along with responsibility over five spheres of life in the rest of the West Bank.

But many Palestinians in the West Bank said the festivities were still marred by Israeli occupation.

As in previous years in Bethlehem, Israeli soldiers clutched M-16 automatic

rifles peered down from rooftops over Manger Square while others stood on main street corners.

Young Palestinian men looked over their shoulders while passing posters on walls reminding people of the nearly 6,000 Palestinian prisoners still held in Israeli jails.

In his annual pre-Christmas message, the Roman Catholic leader of the Holy Land, Michel Sabbah, warned Israeli and Palestinian leaders that opposition to their peace moves would grow unless they sped up the peace process.

Many Palestinian businessmen complained of economic hardship, the result of an inexplicable decline in tourism revenues even though nearly one million pilgrims visited Bethlehem in 1994.

Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem came to a halt seven years ago when Palestinians in the occupied territories rose in revolt against Israeli military rule.

The holiday, which used to attract thousands of Christians from around the West Bank, was limited to religious ceremonies as Israeli soldiers threw a tight ring of security around Manger Square on Christmas eve.

Last year there was controversy over the raising of a Palestinian flag over the town hall. This year dozens of Palestinian flags flew from flag poles around a fountain in front of the building.

But George Sammour, director of the tourism office in Bethlehem, said: "Our joy is still incomplete. True joy would come once we celebrate Christmas under our own Palestinian sovereignty."

Neighbouring Kuwait meanwhile took control of fundraising by Islamic fundamentalist charities, which have been accused of financing militants abroad.

Elsewhere in the Middle East fundamentalist hardliners opposed to the Arab-Israeli peace process continued attacks on targets of the Jewish state.

Forty-five Israelis were killed by Palestinians after self-rule was launched in May in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, while Hizbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon stopped up attacks on Israeli soldiers towards the end of the year.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat faced an increasing threat from the fundamentalist group Hamas, whose support grew as disillusionment with self-rule set in.

Tension spilled over into violence between Hamas and Palestinian police in November, leaving 13 dead and more than 200 wounded.

In Asia, Malaysia in August outlawed the Muslim fundamentalist group Al Barqan which has around 100,000 supporters and numerous networks abroad.

Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim country, banned a fundamentalist book while President Suharto urged Islamic missionaries to rein in their efforts in order to protect national unity.

Oil-rich Gulf states also stepped up the fight against

Jordan lauds GCC stand on Jerusalem

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has expressed satisfaction over a statement issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in Bahrain over the status of Jerusalem and the Middle East peace process.

A statement by a Jordanian official spokesman said that the GCC's final declaration has displayed concern over a number of issues of concern to the Arab countries, including the differences between Arab relations and the need to remove the causes of differences and a commitment to safeguard and uphold the interests and security and the future of the Arab Nation.

"We in Jordan are particularly satisfied over the statement concerning Jerusalem and its insistence that no change in the character of the Arab city or of the pre-1967 borders be made, and we are satisfied with the statement's call for the full implementation of U.N. resolutions concerning the Holy City," said the spokesman.

The spokesman said that the Jordanian government "appreciates and welcomes the GCC's stand with regard to the steps" taken in the Middle East peace process so far, including the Jordan-Israel peace treaty and the self-rule agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

He said that Jordan also welcomes the GCC's call on the co-sponsors of the Middle East peace conference to intensify their efforts to achieve further progress on the Syria-Israeli and the Lebanese-Israeli tracks.

VERSAILLES, France (AFP) — A court of appeal here the heirs of U.S. director John Huston and co-script writer Ben Maddow for a coloured version of his black-and-white classic *Asphalt Jungle*. The defunct French television channel La Cinq and distributors Ted Turner group lost their appeal here and the court found they had "damaged the creativity" of Huston and Maddow. La Cinq was ordered to pay 200,000 francs of the damages and Turner the rest.

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oklahoma (R) — It will be a long time before Charles Scott Robinson is able to walk the streets again. A very long time — about 30,000 years. A judge Thursday agreed with a jury's recommendation and sentenced Robinson, a convicted child molester, to the 30,000 years in prison. A jury deliberated only 35 minutes on Dec. 14 before finding Robinson, accused of sexually assaulting a three-year-old girl, guilty of rape by instrumentation, two counts of forcible oral sodomy and three counts of indecent or lewd acts with a child under 16. When advised they could not assess a life sentence without parole, jurors returned with a recommendation of 5,000 years on each of the six counts. Judge Dan Owens made it official Thursday by formally sentencing Robinson, aged 30 and convicted eight times previously of non-violent crimes, to the 30,000-year term recommended by the jury. "We don't want him to have a chance to ever getting out again," jury foreman Laura Bixler said last week after the panel made its recommendation.

State-run lotteries to be shut down in New Delhi

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The New Delhi authorities on Wednesday banned state-run lotteries in the capital saying the lure of becoming millionaires overnight was turning more and more people into virtual paupers. New Delhi Chief Minister Madan Lal Khurana said he will shut down the annual \$30-million lottery industry from New Year's Day in consideration to families whose bread-earners have been paralysed by the lottery-bug. "The loss of revenue is nothing compared to the enormity of the disease," Mr. Khurana said. He added that he would request other state administrations not to allow the sale of their lotteries in the Indian capital. The step follows growing protests by housewives forums complaining that the dream of becoming millionaires overnight were luring more people into state-sponsored gambling. Mr. Khurana's administration said it will also slap a 20-per cent tax on lottery tickets sold here by other Indian state governments in a bid to discourage people addicted to the official sweepstakes. Uncounted millions daily play the Indian lotteries, which offer huge cash prizes in return for the low-priced tickets. Rallies and demonstrations are staged frequently in the capital against state-run lotteries in this city of 10 million people.

CHILD MOLESTER gets 30,000 years sentence

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Muslim World faces up to extremist violence

NICOSIA (AFP) — Muslim countries rocked by fundamentalist violence in 1994 have identified the growing surge of extremism as the most direct threat to their stability next year.

Thousands of people have died in militant campaigns in Algeria and Egypt this year, while Gulf Arab states have taken unprecedented measures to crush simmering fundamentalist unrest at home.

And prospects look bleak for 1995 with a social and economic crisis threatening the Muslim World and providing fertile ground for extremist groups looking to increase their support.

For the first time in its history the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted a "code of conduct" in December to face up to the fundamentalist threat.

The code, adopted at the OIC summit meeting in Morocco, called on the organisation's 51 members not to finance or support "terrorist acts" and to ensure their territory is not used by violent groups to plan or carry out operations.

King Hassan of Morocco launched a scathing attack on extremism as he opened the summit, saying fundamentalists had no right to issue fatwas or religious decrees authorising the assassination of their target.

Like Salman Rushdie before them, two Muslim authors found themselves the targets of death decrees for works considered to be blasphemous.

One of them, Egypt's Nobel prize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz, was stabbed in the neck by militants

on Oct. 14. The alleged attacker was quoted by newspapers as saying he would not hesitate to murder the 83-year-old writer if he got another chance.

Bangladeshi novelist Taslima Nasreen, 32, fled to Europe in August after death threats. She is the subject of a trial in her native country for offending religious feelings.

Intellectuals are also a prime target of Islamic militants in troubled Algeria, where the year drew to a close without any sign of a solution to its two-year conflict.

Violence erupted in February 1992 when the government cancelled elections which Islamic fundamentalists were set to win and imposed a state of emergency.

Seventeen journalists and dozens of judges, teachers and artists were murdered in 1994, along with 46 tourists.

Around 2,150 militants died in violence, according to official figures. But the overall toll is much higher because the government does not release details of casualties among the security forces.

Egypt likewise battled against an Islamic campaign aimed at overthrowing the secular government, which has left more than 530 dead since it began in March 1992.

Authorities targeted Islamic leaders, executed 41 militants and drove the outlawed Jamaa Islamiyya out of its stronghold of Assiut in 1994, only to watch in horror as violence spread out into neighbouring provinces of southern Egypt.

Oil-rich Gulf states also stepped up the fight against

Column

Londonderry lights up Bethlehem with gift

LONDONDERRY, Northern Ireland (R) — Northern Ireland's second city Londonderry has sent Christmas decorations to Bethlehem in a gesture of solidarity between two towns enjoying their first true Christmas peace for decades. Jim Guy, mayor of Londonderry, said he gave a space set of Christmas lights to the West Bank town so Manger Square, reputedly where Christ was born, could enjoy a proper display. Bethlehem's Christian Mayor Elias Freij had told a visiting delegation of Londonderry community leaders in October he dreamt of marking the Christmas holiday and the Arab-Israeli peace process with Christmas lights. Mr. Guy said Friday.

Huston heirs win \$120,000 damages over coloured film

VERSAILLES, France (AFP) — A court of appeal here the heirs of U.S. director John Huston and co-script writer Ben Maddow for a coloured version of his black-and-white classic *Asphalt Jungle*. The defunct French television channel La Cinq and distributors Ted Turner group lost their appeal here and the court found they had "damaged the creativity" of Huston and Maddow. La Cinq was ordered to pay 200,000 francs of the damages and Turner the rest.

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